

And^w Wallace

T H E

HAPPY LIFE:

OR, THE

CONTENTED MAN.

W I T H

R E F L E C T I O N S

UPON DIVERS

MORAL SUBJECTS.

A New TRANSLATION from the French of
M. DE VERNAGE, D. D. Canon of the
Church of St. Quentin.

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IF WE LOOK AMONG THE GREAT,
FOR
A CONTENTED MAN,
TO WHOM, WITH MORE PROPRIETY,
MAY THIS BOOK BE DEDICATED,
THAN TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF KINGSTON?

WHO,

INSTEAD OF AVAILING HIMSELF OF THE
IMPORTANT SERVICES HE HAS RENDERED
HIS COUNTRY, IN A TIME OF IMMINENT
DANGER, OR OF THE INFLUENCE WHICH
HIS CHARACTER, RANK, AND FORTUNE
GIVE HIM, IS SATISFIED WITH WHAT HAS
DESCENDED FROM AN ILLUSTRIOUS RACE
OF ANCESTORS;

TO HIM, THEREFORE,
IS THIS NEW TRANSLATION OF
THE HAPPY LIFE; OR, CONTENTED MAN,
WITH THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT
AND GRATITUDE, INSCRIBED, BY

HIS GRACE'S

MOST OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE PUBLISHER.

IT BEGINS AMONG THE GREAT

A CONTINUED MAN

TO WHOM WITH MORE FREQUENT
MET THEIR EYES AND HANDS
THAT TO HIS GLORY

THE DUNDEE STONE



INSTEAD OF THE
THEIR EYES AND HANDS
TO WHOM WITH MORE FREQUENT
MET THEIR EYES AND HANDS
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AND THE NEW TRANSLATION OF

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P R E F A C E.

THE CONTENTED MAN, here presented to your view, is not of the sect of those supercilious philosophers, who, boasting of their felicity, look for it in, and attribute it to, their own strength of reason. He is so far from entertaining such magnificent sentiments of his own person or ability, that he rather considers himself as a compound of misery and infirmity ; and those high and exalted thoughts he entertains of God his Creator, cause him to despise himself. He is sensible he has nothing of his own ;

but stands indebted for all things to his Maker. He knows that by his ingratitude he is utterly unworthy of the favours Heaven has bestowed upon him, and that his blindness and servitude are but just punishments for the ill use he has made of his reason and Christian liberty. Nay, he is moreover conscious that he cleaves to what opposes his felicity, and furnishes his enemies with arms wherewith to overcome him. This knowledge of himself induces him not to found the least hopes on his own merits. He must bid adieu to all his light and understanding, should he look for happiness anywhere else but from the goodness and mercy of that Being who is the supreme Creator and Disposer of every thing; and, since our humility implies a full confession of the greatness of God, and of our acknowledgment and gratitude, he humbles, nay annihilates himself, as it were,

were, every day before him, and by this voluntary humiliation in a manner constrains the bountiful Father of mercies to heap on him daily new favours, and to renew him more and more unto the perfect day. In this divine correspondence betwixt a death unto sin, and regeneration or resurrection unto newness of life, we must search for substantial happiness, every thing else being only trouble, inquietude, and vexation of spirit. Thus you see from whence the Man, I represent to you, seeks his Contentment. All the grandeur and riches that fortune sets before us in their utmost lustre, and which are the only things coveted by the wise of this world, have not charms enough to insinuate themselves into his heart; he looks upon them with contempt or indifference; and whatsoever is apt to flatter the ambition or cre-

dulity of the generality of mankind, is considered by him as imaginary phantoms, and shadows of true felicity.



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THE



T H E
H A P P Y L I F E :

O R,
T H E C O N T E N T E D M A N .

C H A P. I.

MAN, being master of his own tranquillity, is enabled, by the divine assistance, to labour for the establishment of it. To pursue the dictates of right reason is to be happy ; since reason furnishes us with every requisite for attaining true satisfaction. Soon as we are convinced that we were born to die, and are invited to become partakers of everlasting salvation, such knowledge should alone be sufficient to instruct us in every precept of real happiness. The thoughts of that last
moment

moment which is to decide our destiny, and the consideration of that happy eternity which is to succeed it, cannot but fill our hearts with joy amidst all our troubles, and inspire us with a full resolution of performing our duty with unremitted ardour and application. Regarding death as our object, and eternity our end, we may, by constantly keeping them in view, proceed in our course in spite of the frowns of fortune; neither tortured by fear, except by reason of our sins, nor excited by any hopes, but those of future glory.

How great the satisfaction to have no other fear, than that of offending God! How exalted the pleasure, to entertain no hopes equal to those of the enjoyment of our future felicity! Inasmuch as this fear animates us with courage to despise every inferior acquisition; and this hope has a peculiar efficacy in restraining the unruly desires of our heart: so that our mind, always relishing the sweets of what is good, in order to our pursuing it; and dreading evil, that we may avoid it; we begin to have



have a foretaste of the pleasures of heaven promised to us through the merits of Christ, and are not solicitously apprehensive of the torments of hell, threatened to the impenitent by the justice of the Almighty. Under these circumstances we shall be fearless and serene when we behold the lightnings blaze, and stand unmoved when awful thunders roll. Our tranquillity is the result of a good conscience, which prompts us to look down with contempt on the alluring favours of the world; and to regard them with such indifference, that, if ever they chance to attract our notice, we are thereby so much the more fully determined to erase them for ever from our thoughts.

The good man, thus firm in his resolution, by the strength of enlightened reason, advances towards his grave with joy; and, having in every action his eyes fixed on God, he is satisfied of their prosperous issue, conscious that they are approved by him who has afforded him power to perform them. Thus may we be happy without the assistance of fortune, and by an irreproachable

able life ensure that solid tranquillity which it will be in vain to seek for elsewhere.

The remembrance of things past instructs us in future events, and invites us so to manage the present time, that by the good use of it we may enjoy the fruits of our repose. As memory is bestowed on man for his improvement in virtue, a good person follows the rules it prescribes to him, that he may thereby avoid the faults he has formerly committed; and these precepts will prove the more acceptable to him, the more he is convinced they tend to his interest; inasmuch as he will be sensible they have no other object or end but his happiness. He will recollect, that all the pleasures he has enjoyed were only imaginary and as a dream; that all the happiness he has desired would not satisfy his heart, even when enjoyed; since they even cloyed in the enjoyment; and in the midst of his supposed felicity he still wished for something unpossessed, the impatient desire whereof made him even forgetful of that he already enjoyed. This truth will naturally lead us to another,
which

which is, That our desires should center in God, in order for our attaining a happy life, and that we should resign ourselves wholly to his conduct : for, if we proceed in our course by the assistance of his all-clearing light, we shall obtain the end of our most sanguine wishes in the same measure as we find them arise in our hearts ; which will confirm us in the resolution of offering our vows on his altar, in hopes of their being favourably heard by him.

Upon these solid foundations the true Christian squares his life, insensible to the alluring smiles of fortune, and the enticements of the world. By despising them both, he enjoys real tranquillity, nor is unmindful of the Giver, who has enlightened his mind to distinguish truth from falsehood, and inflamed his desire of firmly resolving to love the one and abhor the other. Nothing afflicts him ; in every thing he meets with some consolation, after he has learnt the invaluable art of deriving some comfort from the evils which may befall him : Not but that, as a man, he is subject
to

to frailty ; yet experience has taught him, That those who tread the delectable paths of virtue never lose sight of her ; since without seeing her they cannot be satisfied.

Were we truly sensible of the pleasure of being virtuous, all our aversion would be turned against vice : did we duly consider its deformity, it would appear to us in so frightful a shape, that, were it not for our acquaintance with it from the first dawn of life, we should cautiously avoid its tracks, which are attended with so many misfortunes. The life of a vicious man is so irksome, that, instead of living, he may be rather said to linger away his hours ; let him take ever such pains to render it delightful, all is labour in vain. While he is wholly engaged in making nosegays, he considers not that time makes them fade and wither, at the very instant that he is gathering the flowers ; and his contentment is of the same nature, being but of momentary duration. A flower seems to take leave of us as soon as we behold it ; and each pleasure vanishes the moment we enjoy it.

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The misfortunes of life arise from this, that we live without thinking; and, as this state of mind is often extended to the grave, judge yourselves of the irreparable danger of such a conduct. It is not sufficient barely to use time as it comes, we should also employ it properly, since its transitoriness renders us accountable for the precious talent. Whether it be to-day or to-morrow, we must give an account; and whatsoever is absolutely necessary to be done, should be the constant object of our thoughts, so that we may catch the fleeting moments as they pass. Present truth persuades our senses, after having informed our judgment.

They are utterly inexcusable who follow the footsteps of those who have fallen before them, seeing their fall should have served for a light, to guide and preserve others in the right path: for this purpose was reason given to us; but, as every one reasons his own way, persons of weak capacity are the most unfortunate; inasmuch as the ill habits they contract are the sole cause of their disgrace.

If

If a person, who is arrived at such an age as to appear to have no farther need of a monitor, ceases from that time to receive instruction, all former precepts will become useless; for the last lesson we have received requires to be supported by others, which afford a new light, without intermission, in the paths of duty; but youth are so unhappy as not to understand this; or, if they do, their conception of it is so obscure, that they mistake appearances for truth. A wise young man is a novelty in nature; the only way to attain to old age, without being far advanced in life, is to consider, with the merchant, whither we are bound; and, as our career terminates at the grave, that object should be always present to our thoughts; for he who constantly thinks of death shall never die. It is a great happiness to be wise betimes, but the whole difficulty lies in understanding what is true wisdom: now that being no other than the Christian wisdom, to live like a Christian is living as a wise man: for the best maxims consists in leading a blameless life. There are

are as many ways of living, as there are persons in the world ; but every one ought to make reason his light, and duty his guide; for, except our life be enlightened by the former, and guided by the latter, it may be deemed at its last gasp, as being under the continual pangs of death, to the final close of it. He that leads a dissolute life cannot properly be said to live ; such a being is, in the strictest sense, only imaginary, though apparent to our senses ; for the greater affinity it bears thereto, the nearer it approaches to death. We must indeed live a spiritual life, if we would be numbered among the living ; such as live merely a bodily life die with it, and, alas ! to their great misfortune, perish for ever. If the world be our only object, it also becomes our ultimate end : we may appear in triumph here below for a short space ; nevertheless, as we glory in our ruin, earth, which was the field of conquest to us, at length proves our grave. The most effectual way to ensure our felicity in this world, is, to think, without intermission, of means
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to compass the happiness of the other,
which will last to all eternity.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

The most infallible way to attain true felicity, and render our lives happy, consists in leading a blameless life, by a continual discharge of our duty.

This maxim must be the object of our thoughts and actions, if we propose to find that solid tranquillity so much sought for by all the world.

The path of justice leads to perfect happiness; all other ways carry us so far astray; that we quickly lose sight of it, and leave us only an imaginary notion, which passes away like a dream.

C H A P. II.

Wherein the tranquillity of life consists.

ALL seek for tranquillity, but few obtain it. This we need not wonder at, seeing every one looks for it without, whereas it is only to be found within ourselves. The tranquillity of the soul constitutes the tranquillity of our life; we must from our consciences demonstrate ourselves happy; repose and disquiet are the indication of felicity and unhappiness. You will in vain search for the art of contentment in nature, all the precepts deduced thence are contradicted by experience, which causes us to feel the reverse of what is suggested by the former.

Men in this world are obstinately bent on the pursuit of pleasure; but as the roses they gather wither in their hands, whilst the thorny prickles stick fast in their soul, they dare not put in equal balance the pleasure they have felt with the pain that attended

tended it: this last overwhelmed their hearts with real bitterness, whilst the sweets of the other only charmed their senses in outward appearance.

What a strange life is that, which is unaccompanied with the use of our reason! No sooner reason takes place, than we trace with regret the very remembrance of past pleasures; their ideas prove so weak, that we suspect the reality of them. Let our pleasures be ever so sweet, if the soul feels pain thereat, they are changed into bitterness; our mind cannot be satisfied unless the conscience is at ease: and its inquietude is of such a nature, as to make us sensible of the falsity of our own sentiments. While the memory is charged with the horror of our crimes, the heart is incapable of relishing the enjoyment of prosperity. Should we see ourselves possessed of all we wish for, there would still remain a certain vacuum in the heart; the very enjoyment of our desires gives birth to new ones, which occasion fresh anxieties; so that our repose is founded on the fruitless hope of attaining

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ing hereafter solid happiness, whereby we are rendered still more miserable.

The most sovereign remedy against this evil, is, to be content with the allotment of Providence, being taught by happy experience, that we have coveted amiss. We should reflect, that the justice of our prayers alone gives us room to hope for the certainty of their success; forasmuch as this conformity to the divine will is uninterrupted prayer to heaven, whose assistance is the more infallible, as our application is made to an infinitely merciful God. We must not consult the world, in order to be instructed in our spiritual course; for, having nothing to propose to us but false pleasure, its counsels must needs be detrimental to us. Experience will so easily convince us of this, that there is no necessity to enlarge upon it. Let our fortune be ever so well settled, it cannot be solid but in outward appearance, unless it has justice for its basis; on that we must erect true felicity, our natural strength being unequal to the task: We may indeed afford her some assistance, in

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preparing

preparing the matter only, but she alone can give it the true form.

The most fortunate in this world vainly imagine themselves so, being ignorant of the cause of their prosperity : We must look for true felicity in heaven ; there alone we may behold her ; and, as the true light cannot shine into our souls if they want purity to preserve its lustre, so neither can we expect to be happy but in proportion to the measure of our integrity. Integrity and happiness go hand in hand ; thence it is evident, that tranquillity of mind constitutes that of our lives also ; and that, if we intend to taste the sweets thereof, we must submit to her censure, that we may justify our actions in the sight of God, as well as in the eye of the world, he being the supreme Judge of all. True and solid virtue has this peculiar qualification, that it causes us at once to cast our eyes towards heaven and earth : to heaven, for pure unmingled joy, by adhering to the rules of righteousness ; to earth, that we may render our abode therein delightful to us, by submitting, without

without murmuring to those salutary laws we find established there.

It is sufficient for a soul truly Christian to know its duty in order to perform it ; its inducements are so powerful, that they seem rather compulsive ; they prove irresistible, and bear down all opposition ; nay, even when self-love sits as president of the council, they only change the object, by proposing to us eternity, instead of a transitory time.

No man ever attained to more than an imaginary happiness, if a good life did not produce that which is real. Voluptuousness itself may be a means of rendering a man conversant with death ; for he would not be sensible of wandering from the true path, unless he was feelingly convinced thereof ; and, as this conviction will necessarily alarm all the faculties of his soul, his pain will be in proportion to his fear, his fear to the object, and the damage may be irreparable. Let him flatter himself to-day as he pleases, to-morrow he will assume a different language ; the voice of conscience

is so full of eloquence, as to convince the most incredulous.

Some indeed are voluntarily blind, and maliciously obstinate ; but time may break through that cataract of blindness, and the most perverse may yield to the force of example, though they will hold out against that of reason. Those whose fall we are eye-witnesses of instruct us thereby ; and by a singular providence their useless complaints prove serviceable to us, inasmuch as thro' the ear they penetrate our minds, after having previously convinced the senses.

A good life being necessary in order to our happiness, this also will be heightened by the delectable means that lead thereto. Can any thing afford greater pleasure, than the conforming to a law which enjoins us to search for felicity by treading the paths of virtue ? She freely gives it ; our own sentiments convince us of this ; and she requires no other witness, because their determination is without exception. No man ever repented of a good action ; and our hearts knew not what sighing was, till the
fatal

fatal moment they began to think of committing evil. Cain was the first criminal; Cain was the first unfortunate man; his jealousy caused his dreadful crime, and the horror of his crime everlasting disquietude: the moment he lost his innocence, he bid adieu to tranquillity; and conscience, by putting him in continual remembrance of his sin, became his constant tormentor.

Most adorable justice! whose omnipotent, all-avenging arm, tho' invisible, proves the more heavy and terrible, the more it is concealed from our sight; and admits of no cure for the wounds it gives, but what proceeds from repentance.

We seek repose here below, after great fatigue: as this refers to the body, we should with greater ardour study to procure that of the soul, by delivering it from the inquietude it labours under. This repose the world is not able to give; it is a folly even to expect it from thence; such a thought would produce fresh uneasiness, and prove the weakness of him who conceived it. Those who take pains to discover the ter-

restrial paradise, meet instead thereof with a hell they looked not for, by the pain they feel on having bestowed their time in vain. Such is the case of all who seek tranquillity in this world, which being no-where to be found but in God, it is he alone can give it. Voluptuousness may promise it to her admirers; but these taste no more of real pleasure than those who are over-eager in following the chase; they are so far bewildered by their pleasing and deceitful imaginations, that they are foundered before they reach half-way; and, being overwhelmed with shame and confusion, regret in vain their misconduct at the last gasp of their miserable lives, or, perhaps, die in despair. Fortune flatters the ambitious with hopes of tranquillity; but their hopes perish with them, because she is not able to put them in possession of what she promised. Misers seek it in their riches; but, a constant desire of greater acquisitions being a torment to which such are inevitably liable, they fall a sacrifice to enjoyment, and are always in search after the same false delusive pleasure.

It

It is great frailty in man to seek peace by indulging his irregular desires, not considering by the faith of past experience, that he has been frequently heretofore deceived in his opinion, as often as he thought to have found it there. Recollection will satisfy our doubts with respect to this, because we may judge from the past, what the present is likely to afford, viz. only an imaginary tranquillity, so that we have sufficient reason to suspect what is to come. Who can deny a truth which is evident to our senses every moment? The constant experience of this truth will not suffer any one, who will bestow the least attention to reason, to appear so weak as to doubt of it. A man who expects to enjoy tranquillity where it was never known to reside, must have lost the use of his reason, or have misconceived the true nature of it, ere the true thought entered his imagination. As the happiness the world proposes to us is only imaginary, we cannot therefore meet with it here but in our imagination; and the justice of God, which pursues us every-

where, will not even permit us to enjoy such a notional tranquillity with an undisturbed conscience, the remorses of which are a continual check to the repose we seek from sublunary gratifications. He makes an improper use of his reason, who imagines there can be any real tranquillity which is not consonant with reason : by her we are taught, how vain it is to look for it in a life which lies under the daily reproach of being squandered away without profit. If we turn not our eyes constantly towards eternity in time, everlasting vexation and anguish will be our doom when time shall be no more.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Tranquillity of mind is the fruit of a good life. As soon as we grow slack in our duty, we fall into confusion and disorder ; and, if we are ignorant both of the one and the other, this ignorance exposes us unavoidably to the chastisement of our sins.

Those

Those who look for serenity of life from any other source, but their own innocence, will only increase to themselves disquietude by spending their time in vain. It is amazing that people should be mistaken concerning a truth, the daily experience whereof renders it obvious to all.

C H A P. III.

The pains we take, in order to obtain tranquillity, gives us a foretaste of its sweetness.

SINCE we are convinced, that a good life is always attended with happiness, it is our fault if we are not happy, because we may be enabled, by God's grace, to attain thereto. Can any thing be more desirable than to form our own garlands? The work is more agreeable, since we are both the object and end of it. What a pleasure is it to search without intermission after the means of our own content! What a happiness to find a way to shelter ourselves from the baneful attempts of fortune! How

glorious to live without reproach, that we may die without regret ! All these excellent advantages we shall be possessed of when we have found that tranquillity so ardently sought for by all the world. In order to attain it, we must walk in the paths of righteousness, for this is the only way that leads to heaven ; all others being attended with direful and fatal consequences. How unhappy is that man, who shutting the eyes of his reason against undeniable experience, and those of his soul against the light of reason, takes, in this most intricate career betwixt time and eternity, his passions for his guides, whereby his blindness, if the divine favour interpose not to prevent it, will accompany him for ever!

Pursuant to the unshaken fundamental maxims of these undoubted truths, every one ought, in his station, to trace out to himself the road of life according to the light of reason, without any other guide or incentive but his duty. If the way appears too heavy and clogged with difficulties, let him nevertheless advance, lest he lose his time ; for what
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we must do should be performed with a good heart, and with our might. In the year are four seasons, and each has its proper fruits; but in the world there is but one, where we observe a constant intermixture of good and evil. If a man be contented to-day, to-morrow some ill news or disaster may disturb his repose; but when we are engaged in the pursuit of true felicity, in establishing the tranquillity of our mind during life, we shall behold all the storms and tempests rather beneath our feet than over our heads, because we are exalted to a region of calmness and serenity; and, if we now-and-then hear a thunder-clap, the sound to us is like agreeable harmony. Whoever seeks for content must first be possessed of innocence; for those that fly from the one will never obtain the other.

A sinful man is always miserable, because his vicious course of life is the infallible cause of his unhappiness. He may fill his coffers with gold, but tranquillity is not to be purchased with money. He may attain to worldly grandeur, but that will not furnish

furnish true repose : whatever he may boast, this false lustre tends only to fill his soul with shame and confusion. It is true, the sinner has some fair days in his life ; but these are at best but winter-days, that threaten storms and rain. By the strength of his mind he may also meet with some flattering intervals in his pain, after his excesses ; but, as the delight he takes in his pleasures arises from the present enjoyment of them, seeing they lose their relish as soon as tasted, we may judge of his happiness from the transitory duration of it. This is therefore the true way to discover the vanity of all our pleasures, since even the greatest of them, which beguile the imagination of the person that conceives them, vanish as soon as they are become sensible to him. As nothing in this world is more certain than death, so nothing is more obvious than the false notion of our pleasures ; for the delights attending them affect the senses only, whilst the pain that ensues remains for ever in our memory.

Every

Every day furnishes us with examples of sinners long practised in the ways of vice, who, after being wearied and spent in the pursuit of pleasures, so that their whole strength has been exhausted, lead so doleful and languishing a life for the remainder of their wretched days, as must needs excite both horror and compassion in the beholders. This is the fate of those sons of riot and profusion : But it seems astonishing, that the prospect of so prodigious a number of miserable persons, who owe their ruin to vicious inticements, should not be sufficient to prevail on those who still take the same course to look backwards, and chuse a better path, since that they now walk in must inevitably lead them to destruction.

When a man can be prevailed on to reflect, that the taste of past pleasures vanishes as a dream, and that the case will be the same with those he is likely hereafter to enjoy, and that at the close of life he shall have nothing left but a melancholy retrospect of his past misconduct ; it is amazing, that this consideration, which has self-love
for

for its object, should not induce, nay rather oblige and constrain a man to change the course of his life here, so as to live to eternity; whereas, by deviating from virtue's ways, he lives only to die an everlasting death.

Our happiness flows not from the acquisition of riches, but rather from the good use whereunto we apply them. Human grandeur cannot procure tranquillity of soul, which will be the more easily obtained by a contempt of it; neither will dignities add to our felicity, except those which are best adapted to a social being, viz. works of piety and charity towards God and our neighbour, and a constant observance of our duty. Virtue is preferable to all the treasures upon earth. Croesus was constrained to confess it, to the eternal praise of Solomon.

He that despises human grandeur is exalted above the world. Diogenes extorted this confession from Alexander the Great, when intoxicated with wine. Let our fortune be exalted to the highest pitch, Marius, who had been seven times consul at Rome,

Rome, and had marched in triumph as a conqueror thro' the streets of that city, and afterwards appeared as a beggar at Athens, furnishes us with an undeniable example in his own person, that all the glory of the world is altogether vanity.

Virtue makes us truly rich, because it procures us tranquillity; and renders us truly great, because she makes us really happy. She loads us with honours, as she fills our hearts with satisfaction. Did we but love her, we should certainly follow her; and we need only follow her to make us completely blest; for, while we tread in her steps, we shall wish for nothing besides her. What a satisfaction is it even to make trial of this! to remove all doubt concerning it! If we conceive but a desire for her, this desire will contain some part of the agreeableness of the object, and create such satisfaction in the heart where it took rise, as to determine the will; and the will, thus determined, constitutes the beginning of our happiness. Virtue, when practised, is like an odoriferous balsam, which instantly communicates

municates its fragrant scent to all that touch it. It is impossible we should barely wish for the possession of what is truly good, without feeling our soul filled with the good we seek for; the sweetness, inseparably annexed to this desire, forms an essential part of the thing itself. It is God alone who rewards with an infinite good the very will of well-doing, and fills our hearts with such joy the very moment we conceive the first heaven-inspired thought, that our will becomes the first step to our felicity. No man ever applied himself to the performance of his duty, but foresaw and foreknew the happiness that was to attend him in the pursuit thereof. Christians have this advantage, to find sweetness in bitterness, and pleasure in their pain. The troubles we undergo, for righteousness-sake, change their names with their nature; the joys we feel contradict the outward appearances of pain. A soul which has no other object than the true good feels such satisfaction in the constant pursuit thereof, that, by always keeping it in
view,

view, she is rendered insensible to the evils of the world ; provided she is blessed with the will to pursue the lovely object ; for, this will being crowned by the merciful assistance of God, he causes us to taste the sweets of virtue beforehand. What an advantage is it for mortals to see their desires as well as actions rewarded ? The very moment we begin to exert our endeavours, there arises within us the satisfaction we could not expect but at the conclusion. Is it not a great happiness to have a prospect of the end of our race, as soon as we start for the prize ? As the resolution we take furnishes us with an idea of the true value of the reward we expect to receive ; so the same resolution which prompts us to deserve it ensures our success before we actually attain it, by the infallible hopes given us of being shortly vested with the possession thereof.

Good has this peculiar quality, that it produces flowers in our hearts as soon as the seed is sown ; and these flowers so perfume it with their odoriferous scent, that all
other

other things seem nauseous to it. The trial of this truth is worth inquiring into. No man ever had a passionate love for goodness, but he experienced the happy fruits of it by the comfort it afforded him in life; his love constituting all the felicities of it. These are sought for in vain among that variety of objects which inveigle our senses, for they are deceived every moment; such means of happiness as these are contradictory in their nature, and a person is doubtful of their true relish, at the very time he is tasting them. There is no real felicity except that which is found in the practice of virtue: Is any one so weak as to doubt it? let him love her but for a moment, and his love will last for ever: By neglecting to prove what is so advantageous to us, we shall be guilty of an unpardonable omission. If any one is not convinced of the infinite satisfaction resulting from good actions, let him but take a firm resolution to perform them, and that alone will be sufficient to remove his doubts. By this means an incredulous man might at length

length be convinced of his voluntary malice and blindness : But alas ! he covers his eyes with a veil, because he would not see himself obliged to turn back, when made sensible that the path he walks in leads to destruction. Can any thing be more salutary to patient than to make trial of an infallible remedy ? What can a man who has lost his way wish for better, than to meet with a skilful guide to conduct his wandering steps into the right path ? A soul, intangled in the pursuit of evil inclinations, cannot frame an idea of greater happiness than this charitable counsel I give, to determine on the pursuit of what is good ; and may entertain herself with the agreeable thought, that she will be made sensible beforehand of a much greater share of satisfaction, than apprehension of pain. Goodness is not only desirable on its own account, and by the sweets that accompany it, but is rendered so much the more amiable, as it induces us to abhor and eschew whatever is foreign to its nature. The whole
diffi-

difficulty consists in acquiring a suitable knowledge of it ; because to know and to love wisdom are the same thing. All that know her love her ; and they that love her never become unfaithful : All her lovers die constant, to live eternally, because goodness itself renders their lives everlasting.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

It is an undoubted truth, that God hath so ordained, that we should have a true sense of the good he enables us to perform, which is given us at the same time as a reward of the action ; and, by the same act of his adorable mercy, he has endued us with memory, that the remembrance thereof should remain as a farther recompence to us.

He that applies himself with a determined resolution to the pursuit of virtue is insensible of the troubles he encounters, by reason of the satisfaction he meets with in his search ; and, as he cannot but love her with excess, his enjoyments will be proportionable to his love.

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

It is impossible to live contentedly, unless our consciences are at rest.

THough our senses will hardly ever be convinced by other evidence than their own, nevertheless they do not always submit to experience; for, even after the mind is overcome by reason, it is frequently not powerful enough to triumph over them. Conscience causes our hearts to endure the torments of hell, to compel them to confess the evils they have committed, forasmuch as they rather strive to be insensible, than repent; and, though our souls expose their blindness to a degree sufficient to convince them how far they have deviated from the right path, they go on nevertheless in the same way, not considering that the track they pursue will lead them to endless destruction. In this miserable state unto which the obstinate sinner has wilfully reduced himself by his irregular life and conduct, the justice of God appears no less amazing than

than his mercy, inasmuch as he punishes the sinner with continual inquietude, in order to constrain him to desire and seek that tranquillity so absolutely conducive to his happiness.

In vain does he search for it in good company, the most pleasant and agreeable not being sufficient to divert him; and, if he chance to meet with any satisfaction there, the delight the first moment gives him is snatched away by the second, so that it proves but of short continuance. His pleasant rural seats appear agreeable to all but himself, because he beholds in his garden the same thorny fruits that penetrate into his soul; and, if the orange-flowers which border the walks perfume the circumambient air, the wind that accompanies his sight disperses the agreeable scent before it reaches his nostrils. The delightful melody of the feathered songsters charms his ears, but affords no recreation to his mind; and, when he perceives the rivulet flowing without intermission, it serves only to remind him, that his punishment will be as everlasting as his

his pain. The bitterness he tastes, and the thorns he feels in his soul, render him insensible to the enjoyments of a feast; his taste cannot distinguish the meats set before him, having no relish for them. His outward appearance of prosperity renders him the object of envy to others, whilst he, sensible of his misery, envies the condition of the most miserable: Every one admires him, as standing on the pinnacle of fortune, whilst he trembles with horror as often as he reflects by what inglorious means he ascended to the pitch of grandeur he is arrived at. He is beloved, he is esteemed; but those that esteem and love him know him not; and, because he knows himself too well, he thinks he cannot hate himself too much; the remembrance of his crimes is the ground of his self-abhorrence; and the esteem that is shewn him justifies his scorn for it, since this is founded on a basis as solid as the other is imaginary. He is very rich, but his riches are obtained by fraud and oppression; he lives in great credit, but employs it to iniquitous purposes: His
eyes

eyes behold his children established in the principal employments in the state; but these are purchased with other mens goods; though he possesses all things according to his wish, he cannot nevertheless attain to that tranquillity so essential to his happiness.

In this miserable condition to which he finds himself reduced, he goes in search after himself, but his search is ineffectual; he is happy in every thing but his soul, which is tormented with perpetual inquietude; and herein also the justice of God appears to us most adorable, by causing its power to be felt in those hearts that will not submit to it, and by punishing in a sensible manner those crimes that had escaped the knowledge of men. It is impossible to separate the pain from the crime, after the commission of it; we are sensible of the punishment, without seeing the hand that chastises us; and this punishment, continuing without intermission, proves the heavier upon us. It follows us every-where, because he that inflicts it is in every place; whence

whence it is evident, that the same God, who is both omnipotent and just, concerns himself so far in our crimes, as to punish the transgressor ; for we find ourselves afflicted with a kind of pain unknown in nature, and consequently such a one as is incurable ; we groan under an evil that has no name, and it therefore proves so much the more difficult for us to find a remedy against it, as our blindness deprives us even of the will to seek it.

There is no medium betwixt a wicked and a good life ; God gives nothing but everlasting happiness or misery ; the latter must be endured for our vices, as the former is the consequence of the love of virtue : that man must even have an aversion for himself, who would not prefer present and everlasting satisfaction to a present and eternal punishment. Whatever good or evil we do appears before the tribunal of God, either for its punishment or reward. Hence it is that the upright enjoy that tranquillity promised to them by the grace they are endued with ; as the guilty feel the evils they have

committed, by the torments that ensue. If the life of a criminal may be called a life, it must resemble a sleep or dream, because the spirit that animates it has no other virtue to operate, than what proceeds from bare imagination; and, forasmuch as the justice of God never ceaseth, the sinner feels even whilst asleep the torments consequent on his crimes; because, by divine permission, the terrors which affright him in his dreams become at the same time his tyrant, his executioner and punishment. But how deep, how dreadful soever that lethargy may be into which we are thrown by our sins, a man cannot be of sound mind if he be insensible of the pains that attend them, because they have a nearer relation to the soul, than the shade to the body.

I am at a loss to conceive, if bodily health be with truth affirmed to be preferable to all other blessings, how a man is able to bear inquietude of mind (for a wounded spirit who can bear?) that being the most insupportable disease of the soul which can be imagined, because, though we know the cause, yet

yet this very knowledge, by way of a new chastisement, does not incline our will to undergo the cure.

What a miserable life do we lead, when our memory loads us daily with reproaches! You dare not think of the past, the present fills you with astonishment, and the future serves only to rack you with fear; so that, like the damned in hell, you are not a moment without a sense of your punishment.

The most eligible way is to give place to reason and truth; there can be no pleasure in feeling the effects of a disturbed conscience; there is no comparison betwixt inquietude of mind and the delights of our senses, for the strongest will always affect us in the greatest degree: health, riches, and honours cannot charm away the pain of a man blackened with crimes: What good does he derive from his health? his heart cannot enjoy it. The air he breathes re-echoes to him his sighs on the remembrance of the sins he has committed: his riches will not avail him for the recovery of the tranquillity he has lost; and as to his honours,

though many address their prayers and vows to him, he beholds the incense offered to him on the same altar for which he is the victim. This obliges us to confess and to receive it as a maxim founded more upon reason than knowledge, That it is impossible to lead a contented life, except our conscience be at rest. I suppose no one will undertake to object against this assertion, because it is conclusive in itself ; and whatever objections may be made against it will serve only to prove the weakness of their authors.

It is agreed by all, that the Great Creator has so deeply ingrafted into the nature of man a desire of turning his eyes towards Him, that it is no wonder if he continually endeavours to find Him, seeing his presence alone has power of procuring contentment. We cannot expect Him to be present in our hearts, unless it be by the innocence of our souls : This heavenly Sun, by his miraculous rays, not only causes us to admire in him all the beauties of the world, but also renders us incapable of discerning what-
ever

ever appears beautiful besides Him. Our imagination, which seems so fertile for inventing means of contentment, becomes barren, when it labours to that end, without making God the sole object of every thing, in order to the accomplishment of our desires, and the attainment of our hopes ; because, whatever else we may desire or hope for will only seem to make us happy for a moment, the very next being attended with inquietude. What kind of tranquillity can we propose to ourselves in this world ? Its conquerors have even been dissatisfied after the conquest thereof ; so that whether we taste all its pleasures, or obtain possession of all its felicities, they are both alike delusive ; all their being subsists only in our imagination. The greatest man in the world, had he a true standard wherewith to measure his grandeur, would appear to himself so diminutive, that he would soon relinquish his titles ; and the rich man would stile himself poor, were he truly acquainted with the nature of his riches ; he would despise the pleasure of possessing them, and bemoan the

time he had spent in amassing them. If our industry alone is employed for establishing our tranquillity, the task will be utterly impracticable ; the workman will be ever learning, and yet unable to come to the knowledge of the truth ; and the materials he labours with will prove not worth the fashioning ; his vain endeavours will equally convince him of the vanity of his desires, and us of the vanity of hopes like these. Our conscience must serve us as a compass in this ocean of the world, to forewarn us of the danger we are in, and direct us to the port we desire to arrive at. Our conscience must give us notice of an impending storm, by its inquietude, and of the approaching calm, by its serenity ; and, unless we consult our conscience on every occasion, we shall never be fully satisfied of the true condition of our life.

What excuse can be made for the curiosity of those who consult the stars, in order to learn from them their good or evil destiny ? Sure I am that our conscience is able to instruct us much better than they : Since
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that is the source of all our tranquillity or inquietude, and that from these two arise all our good or evil, it will be sufficient for us to consult its dictates, which are the more infallible, because our own sentiments are the interpreters of them. The advantage we shall reap by so doing will be, that conscience never proves deceitful to us, nor can be deceived by any. Our senses are its evidences, which being irreproachable, who can resist or abide its censures? Our memory represents to us the crimes laid to our charge, and the ensuing pain is sufficient to convince us of our guilt. Every one enjoys within himself the tranquillity he attains to; he must hope for no other; and, as often as he looks for it from external objects, he loses his labour in the search. A wise Christian is not subject to this danger; as he labours without intermission to acquire his own felicity, so he enjoys beforehand the fruits of his labour, by procuring for himself a temporal crown here, till he is called to receive a more glorious one in heaven, that fadeth not away.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

It is an undoubted truth, that, in order to live happy, our conscience must be at ease ; and those who maintain the contrary are deceived and misled by their own opinions. They cannot deny, that the irksome remembrance of their past pleasures, and the pain that ensues, are by no means compensated by the enjoyments that attended them, because the latter are no longer in being, but in their imagination ; whereas the others cause themselves to be felt in the very center of their frame.

A good life lays a sure foundation-stone for its tranquillity ; and this maxim is the more infallible, inasmuch as it at once convinces both our mind and senses.

Health, youth, riches, favours, cannot make a man sensible that he is happy, unless conscience also assures him of it.

It will be in vain to disguise our state with a specious countenance ; we may struggle hard to conceal, for any considerable

ble time, a continual pain and corroding disease, for the more they are concealed, the more they increase.

Notwithstanding outward appearances often resemble truth, yet truth never changes its nature, but is always the same; and, the words criminal and unhappy being the same in effect, there is no distinction betwixt misfortune and crime. This obliges us to confess, that the most solid tranquillity and true felicity is no-where to be met with. but in an innocent and virtuous life; because we are taught by Christian philosophy, that from our sins proceed the only real misfortunes that can befall us, either in time or eternity.

C H A P. V.

We must conform ourselves to the will of God, if we intend to live in tranquillity.

IT is not sufficient that we conform our lives and actions to the will of God, because it is incumbent on us so to do; but our voluntary and chearful submission

thereto should supersede that necessity. We cannot with sufficient respect submit to the laws he imposes on us, though they seem somewhat rigorous: our obedience will take off the edge, and reason will correct all their bitterness. As love causes evil things to appear agreeable to our eyes, we must look with the same aspect on those sovereign commands which are given to us, so as in some measure to proportion the satisfaction of obeying them to the honour of receiving them. The greatest respect we can pay to God is that of a continual submission to his most adorable will, without enquiring into the reason thereof: The sacrifice of a submissive soul is rewarded by his eternal decrees, being the most beautiful and acceptable victim that can be offered him. The very character of a creature imposes upon us, as such, the law of obedience, which justice, with its own hands, has engraven on our hearts, that we may never lose the remembrance of it. This implicit obedience is able even here upon earth to procure both our tranquillity and felicity. There is
scarce

scarce a worldly judge that does not wish his judgments to be irrevocable and beyond appeal ; and should not the orders of unerring Providence be without hesitation complied with ?

The authority of God over his creatures is infinitely superior to that of a king over his subjects; if reason approves of the sovereign authority of the latter, judge you, whether the law of nature does not justify the absolute independent power of her Creator ? But, in the establishment of this necessary duty, love must have her share ; that so she may duly weigh the justice of our conduct. A heart full of the love of God never utters complaining expressions, but always expresses itself with thankfulness, and though it sighs almost without intermission, yet these sighs are the effects of joy, occasioned by the remembrance of the many favours it has received, or by the regret it feels of having offended so gracious and bountiful a benefactor.

Since every event on earth happens by divine permission, we ought therefore to accept

accept with the same hand, and with the same composure, as well our felicities as misfortunes ; considering, for our comfort, that the latter are the consequence of our sins ; and for our instruction, that the former are such favours as never change their nature, though we cannot challenge them by our merits. What need we fear in this world, while under the protection of Him who created it ? Do you dread fortune ? Is it not He that moves the wheel ? Fear you poverty ? The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Are you dissatisfied with your exile ? He is omnipresent, and will safely conduct you through the thorny paths of life. Do the pains you suffer afflict you grievously ? He has made the first trial of their bitterness ; and, if death appear in a dreadful shape, let us not forget, that he himself submitted to the same penalty inflicted on us. No wonder that love should be victorious where-ever it comes ; as soon as we know what it is to love, that will enable us to surmount every obstacle to our happiness.

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I am filled with admiration at the conduct of holy Job, when, overwhelmed with the heavy burthen of his afflictions, he uttered these heavenly words, which resound to the very gates of hell, "God's will be done." The messenger who brought him the melancholy news, That his children were buried under the ruins of his house, was much more disconcerted than himself: When they brought him advice of the loss of his flocks, in the presence of his wife (who, to add to his affliction, instead of commending his patience, enticed him to despair) his heart, like a rock in the midst of the waters, stood immoveable within itself against their united efforts; and his soul, which had no other object but God, looked unto him without intermission. He even beheld with complacency his body covered with ulcers, which reached to the very bones, after having corroded his flesh; because, knowing he was sown in corruption to rise again in glory, he took consolation from the very evil which afflicted him, nor opened he his mouth, but when he

he uttered these heavenly words, "The Lord's will be done." Our hearts must needs be touched with these pious expressions, because they had power in them sufficient to charm his very enemies.

What a pleasure is it to be enabled to change the bitterness of our troubles into sweetness, by striving to act in concert with the illustrious patience of this pattern of resignation, in regard to his heavenly Master ! he extols his justice, without being conscious to himself of any crime ; his conscience not reproaching him with any. I cannot but persuade myself, that the misfortunes he saw himself reduced to, being like a faithful mirror which flatters not the beholders, and wherein he saw the real condition of his misery, caused him then to fall in love with himself, whilst looking into it, since it made him appear the more acceptable to God, the more he humbled himself before him. O what a surprizing sight ! I am apt to believe, that had the sun had ears, as he is the fountain of light and vision, he would have stopped, in the midst of his career, to have
heard.

heard him sing his *Miserere*, after having contemplated his constancy under the frightful shape of an agonizing person. The devils were his tyrants, and the angels his admirers : The earth was the theatre of his sufferings, and the heaven a witness of his glory. The world cast their eyes upon him, to afflict and despise him ; but his were fixed only on God, to comfort himself in praising him. If nature sometimes extorted complaint from his mouth, his heart contradicted all that it uttered, and sighed for joy in the midst of his most tormenting pains.

Thus a true Christian bears, to the very last moment of his life, the heavy burden of his troubles, without murmuring or complaining, rather looking always upon the hand that inflicts the punishment, than at the pains he endures. As soon as we re-deliver to God the empire he has given to our will, by submitting it to his, we become the more happy ; in that we look for our felicity from him alone, because all our wishes concenter in him. How happy is that

that man whose will is in subordination to the will of God, in order to be happy for ever ! How unhappy is he who follows his own will, and by that means renders himself miserable to all eternity ! How glorious is it to deny the inordinate gratifications of sense and our desires here below, that we may acquire the true and celestial riches above ! the only good that is desirable ! How preposterous is it to grant every thing in this world to our will, and thereby expose ourselves to all the evils that can be imagined in the next ! Let us not therefore remain any longer in doubt concerning the means of our felicity, but draw this infallible conclusion from the premises, that, in order to meet with true tranquillity of life, we must in all things conform to the will of God ; we cannot offer him a more agreeable sacrifice than that of our will, by submitting it to his, which being never unjust, we shall trace, by following it, the true and delightful path of righteousness and peace.

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All our designs of rendering ourselves happy will prove fruitless, unless we make the first offerings of our thoughts to God, since our endeavours will be attended with success in proportion as we act according to his will: And if in all our actions we consider his will as our end, after having first made it our chief object, we need neither fear the vicissitudes of time or the frowns of fortune, since all the good or evil that befalls us is in the power of Him who is the supreme disposer of all events. He admonishes us to glorify him by accomplishing his will both in heaven and on earth; and we cannot give him a better proof of our zeal in this point, than by submitting our wills to his absolute command. It is the opinion of Tertullian, that they who conform their wills to the will of God render themselves masters both of time and fortune, so that they cannot be surprised by the former, nor afflicted by the latter. It is vain for a man to indulge his own will, which is as changeable as his heart; his desires are not satisfied with the present grati-

gratification of them, seeing they despise what they already possess, and long for future good, wishing each day for new pleasures ; but no sooner are they bestowed upon them, than they loathe and nauseate what they lately so impatiently desired. This teaches us to seek in God for whatsoever may contribute to our happiness, whereby our affections will be for ever fixed on their proper object, and become immortal. Those wishes which owe their origin to ourselves perish with us, because the heart, from whence they spring, is as perishable as they; the only way to change their nature is to desire nothing but the heavenly riches, which being the constant object of our wishes in this world, will be our eternal reward in the next. Of all the great and unmerited mercies of God, none exceeds that which disposes our wills always to conform to his ; and, there being no real tranquillity, but that we receive at his hands, we anticipate the pleasures of paradise promised to us, by rendering our will wholly conformable to his ;

his; because thereby our hearts lay an unshaken foundation of their submission, thro' an entire submission to him. Pleasure having no other object than good, and God being the fovereign good of our souls, to submit to his will is in effect to establish our own happiness, which makes our felicity as lasting as our submission, because that alone can make it so. When our desires are agreeable to the will of God, we seek nothing but him, because he is willing to bestow that glory upon us which is inseparable from himself. What can we wish for more, when, having God, we have every thing? How is it possible we should desire any thing contrary to his will, if in doing his will, which is the same with himself, we render ourselves inseparably united to him, and in him are eternally happy? Were we able to comprehend the true happiness of conforming our lives wholly to the will of God, we certainly should devote ourselves to an inviolable love of him, and have beforehand a true relish of those inconceivable joys he has prepared for us. To re-
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nounce our own wills while on earth, in order to follow that of our heavenly Father, will enable us rather to lead the life of angels than men; for how is it possible we should stumble in the way, if our eyes are constantly fixed on him who gives lustre to the star that enlightens us? He that has learnt in every circumstance to acquiesce in the will of God, by a submission proceeding rather from his mind than from necessity, knows every thing that is requisite to be learnt from the attainment of salvation; this lesson alone containing the whole duty of a Christian. What can be taught us more glorious, than to obey (without reserve or reluctance) him who has given us both light and reason. The more absolute our will is, the more our submission to that of God will enhance and exalt our felicity; and, being founded upon justice, increase its true value. If we are so blind as to want proofs of this truth, let us not delay to satisfy our minds concerning it, since the certainty of it will infallibly lead us to that tranquillity we so ardently wish for.

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If the vain desires of our hearts are the sole cause of their inquietudes, he, that conforms his will to that of infinite Wisdom, has the highest reason to call himself the most contented man in the universe, because he cannot possess a more desirable treasure, or even wish for more. O what an inestimable tranquillity ! to lay the foundation of our happiness upon the will of God, which is unalterable. O what a most surprising content ! to look for it in Him who must render it everlasting, because it will be derived from infinity itself. The most effectual way to acquire this happiness is, in all our addresses to the throne of grace, to make this the language of our souls, “ Thy will be done on earth “ as it is in heaven ! ” What an advantage is it to those whose hearts retain the echo of these adorable words, and make them resound from one end of the earth to the other ! But, in order to obtain an entire satisfaction equally glorious and beneficial to us, we must impress them so deeply on our souls, that they may cause all their faculties

ties and strength eternally to submit to their Creator.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

It is an incontestable truth, That we ought in all things to submit to the divine will, which will put a final period to our doubts; but, I cannot but wonder, that, this being allowed by the general consent of the world, we should not receive, without constraint, those laws which are absolutely conducive to our happiness.

The will of God ought not only to be considered as absolute, but also as it is just, that so reason may be the incitement to our obedience, rather than necessity.

Can any thing be more rational, than to obey Him without reserve, who is altogether lovely, the supreme good, and fountain of felicity?

Is it reasonable force should draw us to that path, into which duty alone ought to be our guide?

If

If we once learn to love, we shall soon know how to obey ; for love and obedience are inseparable companions.

A heart warmed with the love of God soon engages the mind to submit, without murmuring, to his most adorable will ; and it is through this submission alone, that we meet with solid tranquillity.

We should never be solicitous to know what is to befall us hereafter ; it is enough that God knows it, in whose hands are the issues of life : being born to obey, we must live and die in obedience, if we expect our life and death to be equally happy.

C H A P. VI.

If we expect to be happy, we must commit ourselves to the conduct of Providence.

Certain maxims being true beyond contradiction, the following, which I here advance, is of that kind, viz. That, in order to proceed without fear, and with joy, in the various and most intricate paths of life, we must implicitly follow the commands of Providence.

Providence. They who set God before them, in their prayers, never lose the effects thereof, because their justice causes them to be heard ; and, forasmuch as the vanity of our desires produces pain and inquietude, the same rules that direct us to regulate our passions will serve for acquiring the tranquillity we seek for. Our complaints against Providence are as unjust as they are fruitless ; it savours highly of vanity to expect God should change his unalterable decrees for our contentments, whilst we persist in our pernicious course of displeasing him. What can be more delightful to a man walking in a road surrounded with precipices, than to have the advantage of a light which for its brightness exceeds the sun itself, and to have Him for his guide, who also directs every motion of this beautiful luminary ?

We ought always to consider Providence as seated on the unshaken throne of destiny, executing the commands, and pronouncing the oracles of heaven from all eternity. A wise man never refuses the presents necessity offers

offers him, because this refusal would avail him nothing ; reason submits when necessity urges ; but, if you will merit any thing by obedience, it must spring from the heart, since the manner of obeying either enhances or diminishes its glory. The method of carrying the burthen of life renders it either light or heavy ; and, in order to clear it from all inconveniencies, reason must be our light, and duty our guide.

I am extremely delighted with the saying of that excellent person of old, who with the greatest humility sent up this pious ejaculation to heaven, “ Either to obey or die !” As soon as he was capable of making use of his reason, he chose obedience for his portion ; and, the better to enable himself to put in practice that inestimable virtue, he could not be prevailed upon to preside over the society whereof he was founder ; that, by dying in obedience, that holy disposition might constitute the glory of his death, as it had formed the felicity of his life. The reason why many have sought their terrestrial paradise in resignation and retirement

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is, because they were conscious it was rarely to be met with amidst the noise and tumults of the world ; and it is no wonder that they live contentedly in such a state, for their constant obedience is so acceptable to God, that he heaps his mercies upon them. We ought always to appear before him as blind and helpless men, who stretch out their hands to be conducted by his unerring Providence ; we cannot walk far without stumbling, if we trust to our own selves ; the light of the senses is so very dim, that, without the assistance of a better, we are in danger of falling beyond recovery. Those that wish for nothing possess all things ; and, when once we have consecrated our will to the will of God, good and evil are alike to us, and, being given us by the same hand, we must receive them with the same placid countenance ; for, though there is a real difference betwixt them, yet the submission of our hearts leaves us not liberty to make this distinction. Happy is he who fixes all his hopes in God, because in so doing they
change

change their very nature : for it is not barely hope, when you put your confidence in him, because you enjoy a foretaste of the good you hope for. There is such a satisfaction in knowing that your hopes will be crowned with fruition, that the joy of this knowledge may be put in equal balance with the possession itself. Let us not appear to mistrust God, by forestalling, as it were, his favours, by continual sollicitations : Is it not enough for us to be assured he is sensible of all our necessities ? While we seem to want every thing, we shall stand in need of nothing, provided we lose not our patience, which will be rewarded in due time. What a satisfaction is it to live under the conduct of Him who governs all things by weight and measure ! What a tranquillity to put our confidence in Him ! What a joy to be sensible of no other comfort but what he himself bestows upon us ! And what a felicity to consider Him always as the sole object and end of our happiness ? If we call his promise in question, let us

reflect, to our own confusion, that the Divine Truth has no other pledge but itself for the performance of its promises.

Can the lustre of an empire be preferable to the subjection we vow to him ? Can any power on earth, however absolute, be more satisfactory than the obedience we pay him ? What greater satisfaction can we wish for, than to be enabled to obey his commands ; because in so doing we have nothing to fear, nor can hope for any thing better ? They who complain of the evils they endure have doubtless forgot the sins they have committed. Their misfortune is their chastisement ; and, as often as providence sends them afflictions, they should regard them as punishments inflicted upon them by the justice of God. Even good men labour under heavy afflictions, but you know not what consolations God is pleased to afford them ; and you need not doubt, but that, at the same time he laments his pain from the frailty of nature, the joy he feels in his soul, by the strength of God's mercy, overbalances his complaints. O !
who

who would not pitch his tent under the standard of Providence! This is the only place where we must fix our habitation here below, if we intend to live without inquietude. That is a loving benefactor who bestows on us every temporal and spiritual blessing, without requiring any other reward, than to trust to the promises of the bountiful giver. It is nevertheless the duty of every one to follow his profession, and to be industrious in employing the talent God has entrusted him with, each in his station; but we must always put our confidence in this foster-parent of the universe, who, by an uninterrupted concatenation of actions, preserves all things nature has produced.

A man must certainly have the impudence of Satan, to upbraid Providence with taking delight in destroying the works of his hands. We ought to undeceive ourselves in that point: All is good that proceeds from Him; and, though we received it from an unknown hand, it is He that administers it to us. Let us put our confidence only

in Him, if we intend to unite together hope and enjoyment; and let us expect, from Him alone, every thing we hope for from fortune; because her wheel is guided in all its motions by Providence.

O! most adorable Providence! how worthy of admiration are thy most hidden ways, as soon as they are discovered to mortals, whereby thou conductest them to their desired end, without controuling their liberty! How is it possible for us to shut our eyes against the light thou givest us, unless it be from respect and fear? As nothing more is required from us than to follow thee, that we may keep in the right path; so the laws thou hast given us are sufficient to lead us in the way of tranquillity, because in obedience centers the felicity of life, and the exaltation of human nature.

Vain are the addresses and vows we offer to fortune, since Providence knows the favourites of Heaven, and all the blessings we hope for from the former can be derived from no other than the hand of God. We may waste our time in worshipping at her shrine;

shrine; but that will be ineffectual, unless we secure the approbation of Providence; for God disposes of men's hearts and minds at pleasure, and renders their feeble endeavours acceptable. We may frame projects, but must consult the divine oracle, if we expect a favourable issue. We may form the draught of a structure, but Providence must lay the first stone, if you hope to see the work happily accomplished. The light of heavenly wisdom is to our hearts what the sun is to our bodies; that should serve us for a guide by land, to avoid falling or wandering from the path of truth and righteousness; and as a pilot by sea, to shun the rocks and shelves, and pass with innocence and security over the tempestuous waves of life. Providence rules with an absolute sway, and we ought to acknowledge its sovereignty; by That is the universe governed, let us therefore rely upon its unerring conduct. The world is directed by the commands of sovereign wisdom: since we live in the same sphere, let us submit to its jurisdiction; even the light of reason should induce us

to perform what necessity would otherwise impose upon us. Providence designs us for what it thinks fit ; and it is sufficient to know its power in order to our obedience, and that with joy ; since in its absolute commands we must consider this heavenly guide as our common parent.

A favourite, who enjoys abundance of pleasure, is not merely on that account a happy man, because he is not free from inquietude : solid tranquillity is not to be found in grandeur. The good man may really call himself happy, let his condition be what it will ; for he carries his felicity in his own breast. Knowing how to obey, he draws from this knowledge that light which insures the happiness of his life. Since we owe our being to Providence, who knows what is to befall us, we are thereby sufficiently freed from all further concern and anxiety. Is it in our power to change the ways of heavenly wisdom ? Happy for us to learn to follow her footsteps, to walk in the path unto which she directs us, without looking backwards, because

cause futurity alone has a relation to us. Surprising it is, that any can be over-curious in inquiring after their present happiness, since that is in our power (through divine grace) as well as our eternal salvation. A wise man is never solicitous on account of his future situation, because he is in a great measure master of it himself. Good being his constant object, and glory his end, he has always a regard to the former, in order to obtain the latter; thus he pursues his course with pleasure, every step being crowned with happiness.

We are not allowed to chuse the path allotted for us in our Christian warfare; we must walk in that which is pointed out to us, without reflecting upon Providence; for there is no turning back, no stopping by the way. Under this happy necessity of following and redeeming time, our duty engaging us to press forward; the rest of our journey will seem so pleasant to us, that we shall even become forgetful of our age, conscious that we cannot grow old in the pursuit of virtue.

What will it profit a man to be peevish and discontented in a ship under sail with a favourable wind, or to grumble against the pilot, who has his life in his hands? Let us rather submit to reason than to necessity, that we may reap the utmost benefit from our obedience. The wise man knows not what constraint is, because he anticipates its absolute commands.

I cannot but admire the resolution of that illustrious hostess of the prophet! At the time of a general scarcity, she had only a spoonful of oil, and a handful of flour; notwithstanding which, she charitably gave it to her guest, being confident that God would not leave her destitute: She did not remain in suspense between hope and fear; the latter affected not her heart, her soul being filled with faith in God, who crowned her hopes with success; the prophet augmented her oil and flour in so miraculous a manner, that she saw it diminished not during that dreadful calamity. Since God acts thus with us, let us put our trust in him, that we may be happy; a well-ground-
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ed hope will alone be sufficient to procure us contentment. We are taught to ask every day for our sustenance, in order to keep our hearts within bounds by this chain of necessity, for Providence knows the ties of love may be broken. O what a surprising goodness! to make us purchase, with our desire only, all things conducive to our happiness! Every one is desirous of content; let us therefore commit ourselves to the providence of God: He, the true Neptune, governs with an absolute sway the ocean of this world. We need not fear its storms, how dreadful soever, it being He alone who raises and causes them to cease. Let those who fear every thing fear only Him, who can destroy both body and soul in hell, and they will have nothing further to dread: Let those who are full of vain hopes place their trust in Him, that they may feel the happy effects thereof: Let those who have gone astray from the right path follow Him only, and they will be brought to the true and living way. It is certainly dishonourable for a Christian to
repuire

require a pledge of the felicity we are promised by truth, since she assures us, That all who resign themselves to the conduct of Providence, without looking backwards, shall surely meet with a happy end of their desires, and the joyful success of their hopes.

The man, who arraigns the dispensations of Providence, must debase his mind below the very instinct of beasts ; these worship, after their manner, the boundless mercy from whence they receive their nourishment. To despair of Providence is actually to renounce all the rights, as well as all the privileges of nature. To despise the assistance of Providence is to bid adieu to reason, which is the last extreme to which our depraved nature is liable. Who can be so weak as to believe, that He who has given us our being can abandon us to chance, to linger on in misery, through that life he has given us ? Nature, the common mother of all, has so strong an inclination for the preservation of beings, that nothing can be conceived to exceed it ; and
that

that man must be void of the lowest degree of understanding who can imagine, that the sovereign Creator, from a motive of hatred, repugnant to nature, could expose mankind to the hazards of time and fortune, and render them obnoxious to the hardships which attend both. Happy is that man, who can, with a faithful heart, submit himself without reserve to the conduct of Providence! having no other regard, than to that in his desires, as well as in his hopes! The pains he takes for his subsistence will prove even delightful to him, when he receives it at the hands of an all-wise and bountiful Benefactor, with a heart full of submission, and a soul replenished with confidence in Him. By placing our hopes in God, we shall enjoy beforehand whatsoever we can desire consistent with our happiness, because the success of our hopes will be infallible, having the Rock of ages for their foundation.

What man ever repented of having trusted to Providence? But many have died, with too great cause to repent that they had
not

not from thence alone sought to derive all their consolation. True and solid tranquillity consists in leading an innocent life, under the divine conduct: he that neglects to take that for a guide will always lose his way, till ruin overtakes him. It is true, faith is the gift of God, which he never refuses to those that ask it; and, this being the only good which brings us to Him that shall be without end, is not that man his own enemy, who does not wish for both to the utmost of his power?

In vain does a man chalk out his own way for his conduct; for, if, in his progress, he does not keep God in view, he will always walk in the dark, and will of necessity stumble, and be in continual apprehension that his fall is at hand. If you chuse Providence for your Pilot in this tempestuous sea of the world, this is the infallible way to shelter yourself from the storms and tempests that so often surprize the vessel of life. What is it we can fear under such protection, since even misfortunes change their face before our eyes,
though

though they cannot change their names, because Providence obliges us to rank them amongst our felicities. As you have never beheld any one unhappy in the pursuit of virtue, so neither will you see any miserable under the conduct of Providence; whoever submits to that secure protection never dreads the vicissitudes of fortune. How indeed can he dread it, seeing it turns not the wheel, but according to the direction of the First Cause? A heart that submits to the laws of Providence never considers them as too harsh; a soul replenished with hopes in God cannot be disappointed; our eyes, being incessantly fixed thereon, guide us forward in the midst of darkness, as it were in the brightness of day. Happy is he who calls this truth in question, with an intent to be convinced thereof by his own experience, because, after he has once made trial thereof, his doubts will vanish for ever.

The blindness of mankind in general highly deserves our compassion; every one looks upon his own industry as an infallible

ble means to succeed in his designs, without making this due reflection, that God exercises his sovereign power in all events. If we do not consider Providence as the Disposer of all events, we shall certainly behold this Supreme Ruler in an unhappy day; and whoever attributes to chance the good or evil, which befalls them from the hand of Providence, will never enjoy solid tranquillity, how diligently soever they may seek after it. He that mistrusts Providence robs God avowedly of the glory due unto his name. As faith alone denotes us to be Christians, so likewise the trust we repose in his goodness renders us worthy of the divine mercies; so that a man's happiness is proportioned to his confidence in God. The moral and political maxims of a Christian center in this: To have an eye to God in all his designs, if he expects to see an happy issue to them: If we do not adopt these maxims, we shall render ourselves unworthy of compassion, because our frailty is voluntary. He that without reserve submits to the conduct of Providence secures himself

himself against all the misfortunes that can befall him, because these very misfortunes change their name, being converted into blessings by patience, and resignation to the will of God.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Submission to the sovereign commands of Providence constitutes the felicity of our lives. We must expect and receive every thing from its hands, if we wish to be happy in time or eternity. This will enable us to look upon the good and evil that befalls us with equal complacency, both proceeding from the hand of infinite goodness: and, our mind being once enlightened with this truth, we shall enjoy that tranquillity we so much sought for, having now no other desire than the continuance of our present felicity.

A Christian that is wise will so employ every moment of his life, as not to dread its end; for, if he treads the path of uprightness, under the conduct of Providence,

dence, it will be indifferent to him at what time or age he finishes his course. The happiest way of life is not to fear death; for this fear alone disturbs the apparent repose of a voluptuous person.

In vain we frame projects, and employ all our prudence to prosper therein, since the success thereof depends not merely on human means, but must come from above; and, let our wits be ever so acute, they will always be at a stand and in the dark with respect to futurity; so that we shall but flatter and deceive ourselves, if we expect any benefit from them on that account.

All the measures we are able to take fall far short of the attainment of our point; we must of necessity have recourse to the guidance of Providence, because its rules are infallible.

I cannot but commiserate those who, being addicted to the world, hope to reap the fruit of their labours from their industry, as if that alone were sufficient to crown them with success. As all things derive their motion from the *Primum Mobile*, it is
therefore

therefore impossible for us to act without that motion which is communicated to us by Providence. In vain we prepare the sails, unless God be pleased to send us a favourable gale ; and, if we chance to reach the harbour, we shall infallibly meet with our destruction there, unless we pay due homage to this Ruler of the seas, who alone has an uncontrollable ascendant over all created beings.

C H A P. VII.

Every one should see tranquillity in that station wherein he is called, because it is not to be found but in conformity to the divine will.

IT is an important truth, and cannot be too often repeated, That neither the great nor small compass of that orb, wherein we are placed, forms the repose of our life ; for that consists wholly in filling up the extent of our sphere. By looking upon the center, and not carrying our thoughts
beyond

beyond it, we shall find the sure and only way to contentment. If those who, in their different stations being either above or beneath us, excite in us either contempt or envy, we may be accounted the most unfortunate on earth. Let every one stand fixed in his appointed station; for what advantage are we likely to gain by raising our thoughts to a throne, when we are born to be subjects? Vain wishes serve only to punish us, by the inquietudes they produce; their vanity is criminal, by actually impelling us to lead an unquiet life, in order to be happy only in hopes. After we are appointed to a certain profession, let us consider, that Providence has ordained that connexion, which it is not lawful for us to loose; since the Author of our nature has enabled us to perform our duty in the respective stations allotted to us, and affords us true tranquillity, whilst we are striving by his grace to work out our own salvation. What a pleasure is it to think of the satisfaction that will result to us from the performance

formance of our duty! What a happiness to labour without intermission to obtain our felicity, by knowing the cause of our misfortunes! And what a tranquillity to be enabled so to improve our talent of reason, as to fulfil with joy our duty in that little sphere wherein we are placed by the Providence of God!

We should behold with admiration and equanimity whatever is exalted above us, because God has thought fit to order it so; and whatever we see below us ought to fill our hearts with joy, because we find ourselves in a medium, which may serve for a foundation of our peace. Is not our lot very happy, if we are neither rich nor poor, but are placed in a station, from whence we may look upon grandeur without envy, and upon misery without fear? Let the great ones of the earth go on triumphantly in their career, it is enough for us to finish ours happily, and with a pure conscience. Let the world extol the pomp and splendor of the earthly-minded, he that goes on quietly and uprightly shall obtain the crown
that

that fadeth not away. The glory of the world will soon be buried in oblivion ; and it is far better to despise than to enjoy her treasures. Each profession, unto which we are called by God, should be esteemed our trade, in which we are to serve our apprenticeship ; and, since justice alone can instruct us, we need only follow her directions for the obtaining success in our several stations. It is true, every thing is transitory, and the fashion of this world passeth away ; but the satisfaction of doing well will remain with us for ever. Sensible enjoyments fly away from us on the wings of time, but the happiness of growing old, in the pursuit of virtue, will follow us beyond the grave. How often have I wished for some apparent happiness, the possession whereof would have rendered me unhappy by some unforeseen misfortunes, which would infallibly have attended it ! Every thing we desire, besides God, turns only to our detriment ; and, although the success seems to answer our expectation to-day, it will

will bear a quite different face to-morrow, to our shame and confusion.

A wise man looks upon the inconstancy of the times with his usual firmness, and, without measuring his strength by the weight of the burthen, bears it with the greater resolution, because he knows he has but a little way to go, after he becomes convinced, that he who has laid it upon him will not suffer him to sink under it. It is in the power of every one (through God's mercy) to establish his tranquillity in that station he is placed in by providence; for his reason, assisted by the divine grace, will shew him the way he must take to live contentedly. As peace of soul constitutes the happiness of human beings, so ought we to confine our wishes to what is just, and our hopes to what is necessary, in order to enjoy that tranquillity, which the justness of our pretensions and designs can bestow upon us.

It is not enough barely to live, we ought also to relish the pleasures of life, and we shall never meet with any that are real, unless

unless we worthily fill up the rank we are placed in; if we leave an empty space, it will prove the occasion of all our inquietudes. We should never raise our ambition to a pitch we are not able to attain to but in thought; let us leave future events to the disposal of Providence, this being its peculiar and sovereign prerogative; and let us implore the mercy of God, that we may enjoy what is present, considered in its true and transient state; because without that we shall be subject to continual inquietude concerning the consequences thereof.

Complaints, uttered from the mouth of a creature to his Creator, are unbecoming and unjust. As it should always be the object of his thoughts, that his origin is owing to the hand of omnipotence, so should all his words tend to thankfulness and acknowledgments at the remembrance of his mercy, which he is sensible he cannot lay claim to by his merits. Can any thing be more reasonable and just, than to employ our time, as God is pleased to give it to us, by considering, that we live from day to day,

day, without being secure of the next? As often as we carry our thoughts beyond this reflection, we transgress the bounds prescribed to us; the Great Creator of all ages, both past and future, reserves the absolute disposal of every moment to his own mercy and justice; it avails not under what circumstances we accomplish the course of our life, provided our last steps are crowned with glory. That part of the way we have left behind us is accounted as nothing; and, the portion we are to travel hereafter being unknown, it should be indifferent to us (considering the necessity we lie under of always moving forward) whether we are admired or slighted by those that accompany and follow us; because their destiny is the same with ours, forasmuch as they cannot foretel their fate, whether it will prove prosperous or unhappy.

He that is able to live upon his talent has no reason to complain of his fortune; there is great satisfaction in subsisting upon the product of what you have sown, and in

the old Latin proverb *Enimvero non potest co-
cul-*

cultivating the ground that bears it, in hopes of another harvest. It is enough that God gives his blessing to our labour ; if we happen to stand in need of necessaries, doubtless we have been wanting first in our confidence in God ; he that puts his hopes in Him will never hope in vain. Though there be as many different ways that lead to death, as there are different conditions of men, yet they all meet at the grave ; and every moment we breathe being a monument of mercy to us (since we are not secure even of one) it ought to be indifferent to us, whether we finish our life in pomp or obscurity, since both will ere long be buried in oblivion. Our content is not to be measured by our riches ; whatsoever our condition may be, we shall be always happy whilst conscience is at rest, and acquits us ; and the way to obtain this is to be satisfied with what is necessary, and to despise superfluity : this moderation and neglect constitutes our true felicity.

If the sphere in which we are placed is of too large an extent, reason must be our compass

compass to reduce its limits ; and, whilst she is labouring on that work, we may hope for a happy issue. Whatever pomp may attend us here, it cannot form the felicity of our life ; let virtue alone be our inseparable companion, and then we shall have nothing farther to wish for. How mean soever our condition be, we may expect to find in it the tranquillity we seek for ; and, since every one may succeed in this noble design rather by his good life than his great fortune, the latter will become useless to him as soon as he puts the other in practice.

Mankind would be very unhappy if their content depended on others, and not on themselves ; every one has, in some measure, his tranquillity and salvation in his own hands ; for, from the moment he applies himself to the obtaining of them, the grace of God will reward his labour before it is finished, by that firm hope of seeing it brought to a happy issue. It is a singular benefit to know, that, as soon as we devote our services to God, he rewards them by the satisfaction we feel on that account : He gives us

a foretaste of the sweets of the good we hope for, before he puts us in possession of it. O stupendous effects of virtue ! it is impossible to love her, and to complain : let us not stumble at the obstacles we meet with in the pursuit of her, for the pleasure far surpasses the pain, and you will forget the latter, the very moment you begin to taste of her sweetness. I am not ignorant, that ambition has no bounds, and that every one frames to himself a certain degree of felicity, which he ascends to in his imagination, but is not able to attain it in reality. And in this point we are most ingenious in finding out means to afflict ourselves, by carrying our designs beyond our power. In vain do we believe, when reflecting upon our past life, that it has been our own fault we are not much richer and more fortunate than we are : no earthly wisdom is capable of making us either great or happy ; it bears no share in either, since we must attribute all to Providence, for that serves us as a guide on the road we are to travel, and will bring us to the end of it, which will always prove

prove happy, provided we obey its commands with submission. Since God has designed us, even before we were born, to the station allotted us to live in, it is our duty to let him see our obedience when we know his will, without considering the employment he has placed us in. All his dispensations tend to our salvation, which being the consequence of our compliance with his will rather than of any worldly honours, the latter may be deemed useless, but the other necessary; and this necessity should be the more acceptable to us, inasmuch as it has Infinite Goodness for its object. There is but one paradise, and we can claim only one; this is the prize set up for every body: this is the reward designed for the whole world; and, in order to obtain it, goodness alone is sufficient, this qualification being preferable to every other.

Not but that there are divers ways from life to death, but, since they meet all at the grave, there is not the least distinction there betwixt the rich and poor; there you cannot find the least difference betwixt the

ashes of Alexander the Great and those of Diogenes : Alexander appeared in the world terrible as thunder and lightning, but he is gone like a sudden storm or torrent that leaves nothing but dirt behind it. And Diogenes, who confined all his ambition to the wine-cask, which was his habitation, has compelled the greatest men in the world to confess, that there is more content in despising, than in acquiring the wealth and grandeur of it.

Let us be always disposed to believe, that the station wherein we are placed is the best ; if it seems too strait for us, it will extend itself in proportion to our submissive deportment : Humility occupies but little room ; and it is not for us to chuse our rank here below, since Providence appoints it. The last place is no less honourable than the first, provided we act in it with submission, for that is the source of our glory. Happy is he (be his condition what it will) who submits with respect to the laws of the Supreme Legislator ! Let us not fear sinking under the weight of our burden,

den, for God will not add to it beyond what we are able to bear; and let us not imagine, that he, to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, will stop his ears to our prayers. Let us not complain of our pain, nor quit our confidence in the Almighty, when in misery; thus shall we be enabled to conquer them both. We are at the disposal of Providence, just as the clay in the hand of the potter, who makes one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour: Providence exalts and abases us at pleasure: it is enough that we are the objects of his care, who will abundantly reward our labour of love. Though we may perhaps be disregarded by the world, whilst we are in the pursuit of virtue, we shall nevertheless be admired by all as soon as we come to the end of our race, because we shall receive an exceeding great reward of our pains; and the sweet favour we shall leave behind us will restore to us the glory we were robbed of before. When we die, the livery we wore in our life-time will soon be forgot; every one will only take notice how

we put it off, for that gives it the true value. After we have begun to bid farewell to the world, by subduing our inordinate affections and inclinations, the way of peace will be made easy and clear to our view; since the happy moment we bid adieu to them will be the first of our felicity; we shall be made sensible of true happiness, the very instant we begin to live to God, and earnestly to work out our own salvation.

The condition of a gardener attracts my respect in a particular manner, who, seeing himself confined within the narrow limits of his garden, cultivates the flowers and plants, and thus agreeably passes his days. He is sensible that life itself is like a flower, which fades by time, as the natural one by the sun. Happy is he who is able to eradicate the weeds which grow in his soul; and, free from all ambition, measures not his tranquillity by his fortune, and thereby the more effectually secures to himself felicity in his mean employment. They who are eagerly desirous of greatness know not whether it be necessary for them; and in
this

this consists the knowledge of a Christian, that he learn to distinguish what is useful for his salvation, all other knowledge being vain and unsatisfactory.

They are guilty of an inexcusable frailty who spend their whole lives in endeavouring to amass fortunes in the world ; whereas it is certain, that no man since the creation ever raised his own fortune. It is true, we may aggrandise ourselves, but this grandeur adds not to our being, since we always continue the same : for let us ascend to what degree of greatness we may, that will not alter our appearance, as we shall be known by our distinguishing character. Mankind is always the same, and it is vain for a man to disguise himself before his conscience, forasmuch as time will soon discover his error, and cause him to know himself. They who are accustomed to change their condition will with difficulty find one that may be convenient for them ; but the whole consists in living in it like a Christian. He who does not render himself worthy of this glorious appellation acts

contrary to his duty, and works out his own destruction. The same earth which affords such their grave will be their reward.

The choice of our condition lays the foundation of our tranquillity ; and, whilst our mind is busy and anxious in determining it, we are involved in troubles and inquietudes, which ourselves are the cause of, because we walk without a secure guide. They who live in suspense, or without reflecting duly upon their manner of life, die under a deplorable uncertainty ; judge you, by the manner of their death, of the nature of the misfortunes that attend it.

You will never meet with true tranquillity, if you continually run ; you must wait now and then by the way, if you will enjoy it ; and you must have a place to wait in, which, when you have fixed on, fill it up worthily, as before observed, instead of taking possession of it altogether, that the same tranquillity you will have obtained may follow you beyond the grave. The greatest tranquillity we enjoy in this world is

is only by intervals, it lasts but a moment ; we ought therefore to endeavour the establishment of such a repose as has no dependence on time. I cannot take delight in what bears only the name of good ; be it ever so pleasing, it cannot satisfy my heart, if not durable ; because that always sighs after the good which endures to all eternity. Hence it is, that every moment I hear the delightful harmony of these words resounding in my ears, “ I shall be satisfied, O Lord, when thy glory shall appear before me ;” every thing else appears disgusting to me, I cannot endure the sight of it, unless compelled thereto by necessity.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

When a man has chosen a certain profession, he ought not to relinquish it, nor extend his designs beyond or above it, if he affects to enjoy that true tranquillity so much desired by all the world.

Let us not murmur against our lot : let us do our duty in that station wherein Providence

vidence has placed us, and let us follow without reluctance, through that path which it conducts us to our end. He that claims nothing on earth, but a small portion of ground for his grave, is not very solicitous which way he arrives at it.

How long soever the span of life may be protracted, our journey from the cradle to the grave is so short, that it is incumbent upon us to endeavour to attain a happy end, without reflecting that our time passes away, since each moment may be far different from the next in succession.

Let us not look backwards, and upbraid ourselves with ill conduct with respect to our worldly acquisitions; for, since the absolute disposal of all such happy moments as we stand in need of, in order to our succeeding in such designs, is in the hand of Providence, we thereby render it useless and of no value to us.

Let us not vainly reproach ourselves with our misfortune, Heaven has so ordained it; and its uncontrollable decrees should afford us consolation.

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Those that followed us yesterday may outrun us to-day; and we may overtake them again by setting bounds to our ambition, for that alone causes our inquietudes.

By content in your station, you will grow old without repining, and die with joy: Fortune is like a comet that appears in a serene sky, and is always to be dreaded, on what side soever you view it.

C H A P. VIII.

We must employ our time as it comes, from a motive of reason rather than necessity, that by this means we may sweeten the harshness of the latter, by the strength of the former.

THE greater part of mankind use time as it comes, but a wise man improves the precious gift; having constantly in view that submission which is due to the absolute commands of Him who has every hour in his disposal. All created things have such a dependence on their Creator, that nothing can be conceived beyond it: On the consideration

sideration of this everlasting truth, a soul which is always mindful of her duty, meditates continually on the means of accomplishing it; the pleasure she takes in it, and the reason which impels her to it, are to her one and the same thing. As Providence is the guide that directs the sun in every step of his course, so every day he gives us is a new present made us by Providence; and it favours of ingratitude to make such a use of the light afforded us, as to suffer ourselves to be drawn, as it were, compulsively along the road that is shewn us, by submitting with reluctance to its laws.

All exclaim against the times; whereas these precious moments are our most valuable riches, because they are given us to be employed in search after eternity. A life well settled finds no difference in the season; he that lives well, at all times, fears not the inconstancy of time; and, as the tranquillity of conscience is the origin of all the happy days of our lives, we cannot call ourselves happy, unless we are beholden to that alone for our tranquillity. Good and bad times are
directly

directly opposite to each other, yet are they the same in the eyes of a truly Christian soul; as she is immoveable in her resolution of receiving them with an unchangeable countenance, the habit of constancy she has acquired gives her new strength to be equally insensible to both. In vain does our heart delight in changeableness; our will depends on itself, and is the more absolute, the more submissive it becomes to the will of God.

He, that has created us in time, will make it such to us as he thinks fit; and we must receive it according to the will of the Giver, making the best use of it, since our salvation depends thereon. If we live without thinking, we shall likewise die so; but they who take an account of every hour of their lives are not afraid of the last moment, being always ready to depart. Let us not, as soon as we begin the career of our lives, be solicitous to know of what continuance their course will be; it is sufficient that Providence has given directions concerning it, so that neither prayers nor

com-

complaints can change its eternal decrees. When the dread of the future renders the present time disagreeable to us, that fear is caused by the abuse of it. He that performs his duty to-day need not fear being reproached to-morrow : a wise Christian uses his time without depending on it, because all his actions are directed towards eternity; and, as with this view his heart remains immutable as his object, he suffers himself to be led by necessity, without the least violence; and, anticipating his duty by a voluntary obedience, feels much more pleasure than pain in his submission.

Though we cannot be accounted masters of our imagination, but must attribute thereto the cause of our secret displeasure, as well as our manifest joys; yet a mind, illuminated with the light of virtue, never takes appearance for truth itself; it searches for tranquillity rather from its judgment than thoughts, knowing by experience, that the heart cannot be deceived in the knowledge of that peace it stands in need of. A solid repose is so far different from
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an imaginary one, that we cannot mistake one for the other. As the joy felt by the soul proceeds immediately from within her, she cannot be deceived with respect to its effects, to accomplish which, all the faculties are employed without intermission. In vain do the pleasures of sense tempt her by alluring charms, their short continuance renders the instability of them sufficiently apparent, whereas true enjoyments endure for ever.

We bestow our time amiss in making complaints concerning the times; their continual vicissitudes enable us sufficiently to foresee a calm in a tempest, and a storm in fair weather, so as to make the best use (and with patience) of the evils which are past remedy. The complaints of an unquiet mind serve only to augment its troubles; as the silence of a submissive heart allays the pain which it is not able to cure. Let our pain continue ever so long, if we measure it by the rule of patience, the days of its continuance will not be difficult to be enumerated; and, be our wound ever so deep,

deep, knowing from whence it comes, and seeing the hand that gave it, we are guilty of much weakness if we do not rather sigh for joy, than repine under the rod of affliction.

I am sensible, that nature will often much exceed the bounds of reason ; but since she can only propose, and the will decides, if our first thoughts by the strength of our imagination get the better of our judgment, the same heart which conceives also discerns them ; its repose is even traced out amidst that inquietude which afflicts it. He is unhappy indeed, who neither knows how to live nor how to die ; life is a trouble to him, and death terrifies him. What misery can equal his ? The sovereign remedy against all evils is to walk in the path of uprightness, with a resolution, by divine grace, never to deviate from it, because this way intitles us to the hopes of the mercies of heaven, which will free us from all fear of earthly calamities, and the inconstancy of time ; by these means we shall be exalted above them, beyond the reach of the empire of

of fortune, which will be then unknown to us, because all our dependence rests on Him who directs the motion of every wheel : and, if ever our heart be overwhelmed with the bitterness of misfortunes, let us reflect, that God, who has ordained us to drink the bitter cup, makes us also sensible, by way of consolation, that He drank out of the same cup, to allay his thirst.

They who live for eternity complain not of time ; because, as often as they reflect upon its continuance, be it ever so long, it appears so inconsiderable to them, (being nothing in comparison to the other) that they seem, as it were, to disown beforehand those complaints which might chance to escape from their mouths.

When all our pretensions are made to heaven, we travel with pleasure here on earth, without looking either backwards or forwards, because we can then only improve the present time ; duly considering the moment in which we breathe is so very near the next following, that we have no
leisure

leisure to reflect upon either, so short and fleeting is their continuance.

O how precious is time to a truly Christian soul ! And how ought she to husband every moment, since each may be, perhaps, the last of her life ! She makes due reflection upon the necessity she lies under of improving it to the best use ; because her salvation depends upon it. She knows, that time is irrevocable ; and that the sun, whose precipitate flight we discern by the swiftness of its motion, never returns backwards, but continually renews the same course. Every day is different from that which preceded, so that, being ignorant of the number of her days, she thinks it incumbent on her not to lose one ; because on a single minute her eternal welfare depends. We frequently think of means to pass the time away, when it is almost inconceivable how fast it flies ; and yet every one complains of the slowness of its progress. What a weakness is this ! We have nothing to trust to but the time to come, wherein

wherein to think of and obtain eternity, and yet we are dissatisfied at its length, not considering the difficulty of the conquest we are to make; just as if hopes alone were sufficient to put us in possession of it. How can a man be tired in the work of obtaining his felicity, since every one is (by the grace of God) the workman of his own salvation; and, if the task seems something difficult, we must counterpoise the good we hope for with the trouble we undergo; the desire of the first will render the pain of the latter supportable to us.

Is it not reasonable we should finish our task with the close of day, if we expect to receive the desired reward? There is so vast a disproportion betwixt the glory that shall be revealed, and the pains we shall have taken, that they admit not of the least comparison. One day's work to purchase everlasting rest! It bears not the least resemblance.

How infatuated are they who spend their time in all manner of profuseness, as if they were masters of their destiny; they
afford

afford themselves no time to think of their life till it is passed, as if their memory were endued with a virtue of renewing it every day. Such as look upon their grey hairs, and the wrinkles of their face, through their spectacles only, can give but a very indifferent account of their age. He is a very unhappy man, that hears every minute the domestic watch nature has placed in his lungs (whose continual motion shews it by respiration) without being touched with fear, lest the clock should strike to call him thither, from whence he can never return. He that lives without thinking changes his imaginary life into everlasting death.

One would imagine, that the rules of common sense, which teach us to employ our time for the purposes intended by Him who has ordained it, should be known to all the world ; but the greatest part thereof shew us by their conduct, that they are divested of the lowest degree of understanding, because they never reduce the knowledge to practice. We must leave ourselves, with our vessel, to the waves of the sea, and
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the violence of the wind : but since in this case, as in all others, a Christian soul always takes reason for her guide, that serves us for a pilot at sea, and our duty affords us light on earth, and removes from us all fear of miscarrying in our journey. Under the favour of the last, and by the conduct of the first, we may find consolation (thro' the merits of Christ) against the fear which pursues us, since we are not able to obtain a cure for it; but this consolation at the same time renders our pain insensible to us. The true Christian need not beg his consolation from others, in any of his afflictions, since he derives his comfort from Him who sends them : the wounds he has received meet with their cure from the hand that gave them. Though each day is a new day, yet the same sun enlightens them. Our days of joy, and our days of affliction are noted down in the same almanacs wherein our years are fixed; and, those days being pre-determined, let us possess our souls in patience, and not be surprised when the last arrives; let us use moderation, and
not

not be unmindful of our dependence, when the first fall to our share.

It becomes not a Christian to argue with Him who is the Author of his reason. His first lesson admonishes him to submit implicitly to all the laws he has given him; and, if the difficulty of performing them causes his heart to murmur, he ought to anticipate his complaints by a real repentance, and even condemn them before they are uttered. Happy are they who suffer themselves to be governed by Him, who rules with infinite wisdom every thing he has created, and who is infallible in all things. Error and blindness are so natural to us, that they are congenial with our nature; whereas the future is with God the same as the present; he cannot err: but even the present time appears at such a distance from us (the eyes of our understanding being darkened) that we often are misguided by our own light. O how unhappy should we be, did God abandon us to our own conduct; and still more unhappy, did he leave us at liberty to ascertain

tain the period of our life : very probable it is we should chuse only spring and autumnal days, both which seasons would end in the winter of his displeasure, that would last to all eternity. This certain rule may serve as an invariable foundation with respect to the felicities of the world : all the different ways, leading to voluptuousness, meet in pain and repentance ; I say, in everlasting pain, because no repentance will avail in the life to come. Let us then improve time as it comes to our hands, and dispose ourselves to accept of it as God is pleased to offer it : good and evil are equally profitable to us, according to the use we make of them. If it be fair weather, it lasts not very long, and a calm is always the forerunner of a tempest ; and, if the day be foul, its short continuance should be our comfort. Happy is he who stands in no need of consolation ! and still more happy he who looks for it only in the pursuit of virtue ; because, whilst he is following her steps, she is heaping rewards upon him, both a temporal and eternal crown of felicity.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

He who has appointed times and seasons, and regulates every hour, enjoins us to receive them as he is pleased to bestow them, and to look upon his absolute commands with a submissive heart, rather than with an uneasy mind, that we may find tranquillity in our obedience; and, having but a short time to abide in this world, let us so live as to be every moment in a condition to die.

The most effectual way to acquiesce in present dispensations, is, not to repine at what is passed, nor to dread what may happen hereafter.

They who rightly consider the true nature of time, ever present to our view, but always inapprehensible to our understanding, should represent to themselves the good and evil of the eternity which is to succeed it, that they may obtain the first by avoiding the last; and, since even they who husband their time best frequently neglect some-

something which they ought to have done, let us therefore do that to-day which we intended to reserve till to-morrow, that we may employ the little time that remains in well-doing. This is the way to make a true balance betwixt, and to attain, contentment in this life, and happiness in death.

C H A P. IX.

Desire and fear being the cause of all our pain and troubles, we should desire nothing but God, and fear Him only, in order to procure everlasting happiness and peace.

EXperience teaches us, that our vain desires and imaginary fears cause all our inquietudes and troubles. There is no heart without desire, nor a soul without fear; and as the latter presents to our view all the evils that may befall us as if they were actually present; and the other occasions us to lead a lingering life in vain attempts; we may maintain with good reason, that, if the one renders us unhappy, the

other augments the number of our miseries. How irksome is it to live always in the desire of a felicity, without ever enjoying the possession thereof ; and to feel continually the pain occasioned by the apprehensions that remain within us ? The things we wish for torment us as much as those we fear. Our desires make us outrun even futurity, and we seek for what has no existence in nature. Our fear is so ingenious, as that, after having tortured our imagination, it brings so near to us the evils which are still at a distance, that we find ourselves wounded without perceiving the hand that gave the stroke.

It is a great misfortune to carry within one's breast a heart always fertile of desires, without ever seeking the one thing needful ; always full of fears, without any dread of offending God. We sigh after a transitory good, and desire not the sovereign good. We deprecate the evils that may befall us, without fearing Him who can protect us against them. What a strange kind of madness to afflict one's self by useless desires

fires and vain fears ! We employ our present time in wishing for the future, being happy only in hopes ; and we anticipate the future by suffering beforehand all the evils which threatened us. We must check our covetous heart, which always aspires after imaginary felicity ; our thoughts should continually incline towards God, and desire nothing but himself, because in Him is comprehended every good, in whom all fulness dwells. We must divest our soul of the fear which tyrannizes over her ; and, forasmuch as sin alone is the cause of our unhappiness, let us endeavour to live uprightly, because innocence will procure us peace at the last. He that desires God with his whole heart has no room left for new desires, because he can enjoy and wish for nothing comparable to him ; and how deeply soever the fear of misfortunes may for a while grieve and distress his soul, when he considers that the greatest of all is sin, he will become insensible and regardless of the rest. O how happy is he who tries the experiment of this truth ! Our hearts sigh,

without duly weighing the object that causes them to sigh; our souls fear, without knowing the ground of their fear; our desires grasp after transitory things, which we can enjoy but for a season; and we despise and reject the Infinite Good, the possession whereof will be everlasting, and beyond conception. We fear imaginary evils, and frequently such as never come to pass, without so much as thinking of those punishments which may infallibly befall us. He that wishes only for what is just will not fail to be heard; and he that improves the present time need not fear that which is to come.

As our love to God should not be confined within the bounds of moderation, so there is not the least comparison betwixt the desire of being possessed of his glory and the pains we take to raise ourselves to honours here below; and this unhappy division of our hearts causes all our inquietudes. We are divided betwixt a desire of the joys of heaven and the enjoyments of the world, and with the same heart are apprehen-

prehensive of the misfortunes of this world, and the torments of the other. Judge now, whether such a desire, and such kind of fear, can bring us to the tranquillity we look for. He who is even willing to break the public vows he has made seems ignorant that the will is as criminal as the action. What a strange kind of blindness! Instead of submitting to the law he has imposed upon himself, and to the yoke he has chosen; instead of bearing those chains he has forged, he afflicts and torments himself, without reflecting that his affliction cannot alter the rigour of the law, nor his torment remove the hardship of his yoke, and that his inquietude serves only to increase the weight of his setters.

What a pleasure is it to keep our life within the restrictions God has ordained, for which we ought to implore his mercy! What a happiness is it to die in a prison whereof we have voluntarily surrendered to Him the keys, and of which He is the keeper! How glorious is it to be in a condition

dition to fulfil one's duty in the station He has designed us from all eternity! What happier lot can a man wish for? Some are very desirous to be discharged from the heavy burthen of marriage, not remembering, that the contract was made in heaven, before the articles thereof were signed upon earth. The ties made in heaven, whereby hearts are linked together by public authority, are inseparable. Such desires are both sacrilegious and useless, and prove the tyrants and executioners of the unfaithful hearts that conceive them. Many render themselves unfortunate through apprehension of being so hereafter, because they place not their trust in Providence; as if they expected a pledge and security for the assistance they should hope and pray for. This servile and criminal fear, which keeps such souls as are under its dominion in a hell upon earth, makes as many miserable as are ensnared by its insinuations. We ought to fear no other misfortunes but such as are the consequences of our sins: a peaceable conscience fills our souls with tran-

tranquillity. To be innocent is to be happy.

If we make uprightness the rule of our desires, it soon will free us from all inquietude; and, if our duty justifies our fears, that will enable us to conceive them without perturbation. We ought to desire what is good, and fear what is evil: and, God being the only desirable good, and sin the only evil to be dreaded, we must without intermission sigh after the one, and abhor the other, if we intend to enjoy tranquillity whilst living, or happiness at our latter end. It is a melancholy reflection to consider, that, supposing we have every thing here below according to our hearts desire, we are yet masters of nothing but what is transitory! God suffered the most ambitious of princes to conquer the world, who scarce saw himself in possession thereof, but he found himself deceived in the fruits of his towering imaginations, being soon inclosed within a small space of ground of seven feet in length, which served him for a grave. Some are eager after riches; this cost

Crœsus his life and glory : I say, his glory, because his memory remains inglorious to posterity. Fortune sold at so dear a rate to Cæsar the attempt he made to wear the imperial diadem of the world, that, the first time he put it on his head, he sunk under its weight. Nero, not satisfied with the imperial dignity, appeared on the stage as a comedian ; but he afterwards furnished ample matter for a bloody tragedy ; and, after having diverted the people in his life-time, gave them also the diversion of seeing the spectacle of his death. Many are desirous of a refined wit, without considering that the beauty thereof consists in its goodness, and this goodness in the light it may afford us to find out the path that leads to salvation.

Women covet nothing so much as beauty ; not considering it is attended with more misfortunes than any thing else in the world : the beauties of the body are like flowers in a garden, which bid farewell to us almost as fast as we cast our eyes upon them, and we can scarce view them above once in that height

height of lustre the sun imparts to them. Amongst all the gifts nature can bestow upon us, none is more fatal than this, being inseparably connected with those misfortunes which always attend a great beauty. He that speaks of a beautiful woman speaks of an unfortunate one, unless she be endued with peculiar grace, both of will and thought, for avoiding those that pursue her. Let us desire nothing but God, let us fear nothing but Him; for this is the only way to enjoy tranquillity in the midst of all the inquietudes that are able to afflict us. The true art of relishing the pleasures of life proceeds from knowing which are the true pleasures; and, there being no other than to please Him who is the Author of solid and substantial bliss, we must in all our desires, as well as in our fears, keep Him in constant view, and fortify our mind by a sense of this glorious and divine object, which renders all those that trust in Him invincible.

Were the miser thoroughly acquainted with the nature of his treasure, he would
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be so far from desiring it, that he would change his love into hatred : but how should he come to this knowledge as long as he is blinded by the very light of his own reason, because he misapplies it? A long series of instances might suffice to convince him by sensible objects, for he walks over the ashes of a multitude of rich and worldly men, who died with a vain repentance of their crimes, and went to the grave dressed in the same black garb of their avaricious passions. If these alarming instances are not sufficient, I know not what to say to, or how to admonish them ; they must perish with their desires, which, being unlimited on earth, nothing but hell can restrain, nothing but hell can terminate. A wicked man will never be able to shelter himself against the thunderbolts of Heaven ; all the altars of refuge will, at the day of retribution, change both their name and nature, and become altars of expiation, where sinful souls will remain for ever exposed like victims, to be sacrificed every moment, without the least hope of seeing an end of
their

their misery. He that passes away his days in vain desires, will be convinced, when he comes to his journey's end, that he has slept away his time, and that his life has been no more than a dream.

Should we have the good fortune to see all our wishes accomplished, what gainers shall we be by the bargain! for, since we can wish for nothing but the unsatisfying enjoyments of this world, we shall not be the richer for the possession thereof. What happiness can be proposed to us here on earth, whilst Providence has made it the place of our grave? Enquire of the rich that are dead, what value they put on their riches now? They will tell you, That they amount to no more than a shroud to be buried in *. Is it worth while to take so much pains for so inconsiderable a being? The most eligible way to check at once the natural and inordinate affections of our

* Agreeable to the sentiment of the poet, and worthy to be inscribed on the tomb of every child of man :

A lump of earth is all remains of thee ;

'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be.

hearts,

hearts, is to turn them towards heaven, and to make that their object which ought to be their hopes ; and as heaven is no less dreadful by the noise of its thunderbolts, than stupendous by the beauty of its stars, let us hearken to the awful voice of its thunder, and conceive beforehand, what it will announce us on the day of judgment, that we may thereby dispose our mind to such thoughts as are suitable to the terror of the last day, when the empire of endless eternity will commence.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

It is no difficult task to prove, that even the possession of whatever we can desire below first gives us a distaste, and afterwards an utter dislike. The very enjoyment of what you wish for is sufficient to eradicate your love of terrestrial things ; and the very possession of them proves oftentimes a check to our eagerness to obtain them.

It is a quality peculiar to transitory things, to disturb the heart that enjoys them ;

them; for, since they cannot fulfil its avaricious desires, which renew every day, it forgets the possession already obtained; and this forgetfulness creates new ones. But, when we turn our hearts to heaven, instead of earth, and make God the only object of our desires, this avaricious and disquiet heart changes its nature all at once, and rejoices in its own desires and hopes without the least inquietude, because it cannot conceive any thing beyond what it desires, nor hope for a greater felicity than what it is in possession of. It is the same with fear, likewise, which frequently gains such an ascendant over the soul, as to cause it to fear every thing.

We dread poverty, sickness, and a thousand other misfortunes which may befall us by God's permission, and punish us by the pains we endure, for the offences we continually commit against him. But, when our fear has no other object but sin, in order to avoid committing it, this passion changes its nature to our advantage, because it at once inspires us with a resolution
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to despise all the misfortunes that may hereafter befall us, and enables us to overcome those that for the present afflict us.

Judge what a benefit it is to us to desire nothing but God only, and by him to be enabled to quench that thirst in our hearts which makes us sigh always after transitory pleasures. Let us represent to our mind, what a felicity it is to fear nothing so much as to offend God ; to be proof against all other attempts of fear ; and to be able to look all dangers, nay even death itself, in the face, with a serene countenance. This is the reward God bestows upon such as love and fear him.

C H A P. X.

All the happiness of this world consists in the search after the right way of compassing the felicity of the other.

THEY, who vainly search after the tranquillity of life from the enjoyments thereof, are inexcusable, because every

every one may find it, whilst he is working out his own salvation; and, this very work and the tranquillity of life being the same in respect both to the object and the end, we cannot be unhappy whilst we are employed therein. What can be conceived more delicious than to employ the time of this always languishing life in gaining a new one, which will prove immortal! What greater happiness can be imagined, than to find ourselves engaged in that great work, of rendering ourselves happy to all eternity! And what can be more glorious, than to spend our time in providing ourselves with such garlands, as its inconstancy is not able to blast, or deprive us of! In this employment alone, in this work alone, in this action alone, consists the felicity of life. What can be more truly satisfactory than the joy of an innocent life! What can be more charming or desirable, than that tranquillity of mind, which prompts us to think of nothing but the performance of our duty! Our heart is certainly never more at ease, than when it breathes the sweet scent of a
good

good life. This truth we may affirm admits of no contradiction; every man may soon be convinced of it, since reason itself, confirmed by experience, will make the most incredulous sensible of it. We have nothing else to do but unweariedly, by the grace of God, to perform our duty: We need only think of that felicity we look for, in order to be happy; and the most effectual way to live in tranquillity is to procure rest to our consciences. They who seem continually tired, and linger out their lives, as if they lived without thinking, are no less blameable than they that continually complain of the evils they suffer, just as if they had utterly forgotten the evils they have committed. Our life is of too great consequence to us, to pass it away without thinking of it; because it was bestowed upon us, that we might employ it in the search after eternity; complaints have a very ill sound in the mouth of a Christian; we must submit to the law, and the oracle that pronounced it has commanded us to be silent.

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How unhappy are they who are thus burthened to themselves; they search in vain after themselves even when present, but without the desired end; and, as they live rather out of necessity than reason, they trail their chains instead of carrying them; and, overcharging the very air they breathe with their continual sighs, their death proves as miserable as their life has been before, without ever making due reflection either upon their life or death. Neither are those more excusable, who, prompted by impudence, and rather becoming devils than Christians, are dissatisfied, and find fault with every thing, as if they owed their being to chance; they set up for a reformation of the disorders of the world, whilst their life is a continued scene of confusion. To be discomposed at every thing is not the way that leads to tranquillity; and we cannot expect to be happy, without employing our thoughts for the attainment of felicity; every one must, without ceasing, labour towards the establishment of his happiness, in order to render its foundation solid and unshaken;

unshaken ; and, if we expect our labour to be crowned with success, we must continually persevere in it, because, should we desist but a moment, that very instant may produce our destruction.

Let no one be startled at the troubles he is like to encounter, since they are counterpoised by such pleasures as will render them insensible to us ; or, if they affect us in any degree, they will carry along with them such allays and inticements, as will cause us to love instead of fearing them. How can we think ourselves unhappy in treading the footsteps of Him, who has been partaker of all our miseries ? Or how can our hearts be sensible of torments, whilst we follow the God of sufferings and the Man of pains ? the misfortunes he thinks proper to send us are so many felicities, for the hand that gives them changes their nature ; and, if we do not taste the sweets that attend them, we may on that account only call ourselves unhappy, since it is our insensibility which makes us truly so. When the felicities of heaven are not the objects
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of our desires, the happiness we expect here on earth proves the cause of our inquietudes; if our mind be not intent on the work of salvation, our heart will be void of consolation from those dangers which presage our destruction.

Though a great and good soul is not actuated by interest, nevertheless, being animated by the prospect of glory, even impossibilities seem easy to her. It is the same with those who have fixed their love on eternity; they think it can never be purchased at too high a rate, and therefore never esteem themselves happy but when they are in search of the means to obtain it; and, as this their happiness far overbalances their pain, they forget the latter, that they may the better relish and secure the former.

It is an undoubted truth, that they who call themselves unhappy whilst pursuing their course of life, whereof heaven ought to be proposed by them as their reward, are actually so, by reason of their insensibility; because they not only shut their eyes against
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the brightness of that light which is appointed to enlighten them, but continue insensible of the sweets of the hopes they ought to conceive. Is it not a reproach to Christians, professing the faith of Christ, to see themselves outdone in their confidence by the Macedonians who were infidels, and chearfully followed Alexander; their king and general, being animated by the hopes of earthly conquests for which they had no other pledge nor security than his invincible courage? The vast sandy plains of Asia, in their most frightful appearance, could not stop their career; the numberless rocks of the Caspian Sea were not able to withhold or terrify them, after they had taken a resolution to surmount all obstacles, and either to conquer or die, determined not to quit their hopes but with their lives. What can we think of ourselves, who are fighting for a more glorious reward, when we take a right view of those unfortunate heroes, who for perishable riches encountered almost insurmountable dangers and hardships? Shall we reflect with sadness on the approach of
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that day, which is to bless us with everlasting happiness and rest? Shall we call ourselves miserable, whilst we are maintaining our just pretensions to that felicity which shall be without end? Can we be disturbed with inquietude whilst we are labouring to attain that infallible tranquillity, whereof God himself is the inexhaustible source, the everlasting foundation? And shall we give licence to our tongues, and murmur against our lot, as though we called in question the mercy of Him who is the Author of these inviolable laws? That young monarch, who had only earthly things in his view and disposal, sees himself attended by multitudes of divers nations, who with pleasure follow him through the most remote parts of the world: And alas! the Great Creator of the universe, who has made heaven our reward, does not engage us to follow Him but with reluctance, with tears, sighs, and sobs. But I do not wonder it should be so; a divided heart has no true master, we cannot love heaven and earth at once. Unless we surrender it wholly
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to God, the small part we keep back to ourselves is sufficient to incline our will contrary to his, which is the ground and cause of our misfortunes. In vain do we flatter ourselves with hopes of felicity in life, since we shall never meet with it in this world, unless we look for it in the other, by applying all our thoughts, care, and actions, to acquire it ; and from these endeavours alone we may reap an abundant advantage of our tranquillity.

If it be true, that the ill use we make of riches is the source of all the misfortunes of life, we must then agree, that rich men are in need of continual consolation, because they generally make so ill a use of them, that, without the peculiar mercy of God, they stumble upon the rock of voluptuousness, which gives them a mortal fall. To be rich and happy ! There is too great an incompatibility betwixt true felicity and riches, for us to see them meet in the same object ; and the first and greatest of men chose poverty and want for his share ; not that it is impossible for a rich man to be saved ;

saved; but, unless he employs his riches for the gaining of heaven only, he will never arrive there. How is it possible for us to think of the pleasures of heaven, as long as we relish those of the world, and imagine, that we can obtain its felicities without even thinking of them? This is actually mistaking a dream for real truth. The greatest good fortune we should wish for, is to have a competency to act in that station God has called us to, without lifting up our eyes to what is above us, that being a portion reserved for another: we ought to be contented with such a condition as God has been pleased to bestow upon us, every other being not for our good; we should therefore draw a curtain betwixt them and our ambitious desires, that we may not be tempted by the sight thereof. The whole world hunt after riches, thinking they will make them happy; and those that get them are the most unhappy of all; I say, the most unhappy, because in the acquisition they run the hazard of being damned, and damnation comprehends all the misfortunes that

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can be imagined, nay even far beyond imagination. To live in affluence of fortune is to lead from day to day a life happy and agreeable only in outward appearance. Its felicities and pleasures are merely imaginary, since those that taste them enjoy life but from one moment to another, neither their youth nor healthy constitution being capable of securing them one instant against death.

Were we truly sensible of the high value life is to us, we should certainly spend it in continually doing good, since charity will never fail us. 'Tis in vain to torture ourselves for the obtaining worldly riches, forasmuch as we must shortly leave them behind us; nor was ever any one the richer by the possession of them. This convinces us to our shame, and by woful experience, that all the paths of sensual gratifications meet in our destruction; because the most fortunate here on earth very frequently attain not to the state of salvation. Though divers roads may bring some to heaven, it must nevertheless be confessed, that the path
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chosen by God himself is the securest of all, though it be the most difficult, at least in outward appearance : to understand its true nature, we must consult the secrets of our own hearts. In vain may we meet with success in all our undertakings on earth ; the most essential point will be still wanting, unless we procure our salvation, because without that every thing else will prove useless to us. If to have fortune at one's heels, to keep her at command, and dispose of her favours at pleasure ; if these, which are of the highest rank, cannot make a man happy, what tranquillity can he propose to himself in the possession of all the rest ? Let us do what we will, we do nothing if we neglect to secure our salvation. If you could live a hundred ages, and enjoy a daily revenue of a hundred millions, all this would be no more than a chimera, which can only satisfy our imagination for an instant, because they are transitory and uncertain. A truly solid mind is known by its thoughts ; and all our thoughts are useless, unless they have eternity for their

object, or at least are continually directed towards it. As every one in this world lives in hopes of being saved, so he is actually dying even whilst he lives, if he labours not without intermission to obtain his salvation. Let every thing have succeeded ever so well according to our wishes here, if we pass into eternity without having used our utmost endeavours in this life to attain true holiness, we shall indeed have an eternal existence, but that will only tend to render our misfortunes and pains more lasting and insupportable.

It is difficult for a rich man to be saved; because his riches entice him to follow the path of voluptuousness, which so fills his mind with imaginary pleasures, that he scarce ever thinks of the real ones; and what increases his misfortune is, that it will attend him from hence to all eternity. To be always fortunate in this world is in effect to stand always in need of consolation; because the highest felicities here are the infallible forerunners of the greatest misfortunes. Nature never produced roses with-

without prickles ; every bright day is succeeded by night ; and, though the sea is the emblem of inconstancy, yet this changeableness is expedient, necessity requiring fair weather should be intermixed with tempests. Every rich man excites my compassion ; their lot appears so unhappy, that I am startled at the very thoughts of it ; to be lulled asleep in the pleasures of this life, not to waken till at the agony of death, and to be lost to all eternity, are the most dreadful reflections that can be made. The whole world covet riches, without considering that the enjoyment thereof is the cause of most of the misfortunes of life ; to be truly rich, you must learn to despise these meaner things, as not essential to happiness.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Nothing can be more deplorable than a sense of our mis-spent riches at the point of death ; as these earthly advantages are buried with us, so the rehearsal thereof moves rather pity than admiration. If the ho-

nours we enjoy, even whilst present, are unsatisfying, what can be said of our past glory ?

All the felicity of this world consists in searching after means to acquire the happiness of the other : our endeavours therein are so agreeable, and the difficulties we meet with so pleasing, that our hopes are no less relishing than the possession itself, because they are infallible.

Can any thing be more delightful, than to spend our whole time in attaining eternity ? This is the true lasting felicity, this is the true content ; and who ever looks for it any where else will be disappointed for ever.

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

If we intend to live happy in this world, we must consider every day as if it were our last ; constantly minding our duty, because each moment may put a period to our life.

THEY who repose in the false happiness enjoyed here below, are doubtless unmindful, that the world is like a goal full of prisoners condemned by an irrevocable sentence, expecting every moment to be that of their execution. Time conducts to the grave by the path marked out by Providence ; and though it carries in its hand the watch that shews its transitoriness, yet the final minute is not denoted thereby. Under this uncertainty of the exact time of death, we cannot attain to true tranquillity in life, unless we are regardless of it ; because this indifference concerning its duration renders our path so smooth, that we advance with pleasure, and arrive at our journey's end with satisfaction. For is it not a pleasant exercise to procure our hap-

pinefs in the performance of our duty ? And can any thing be more delightful, than to follow our destiny by treading the paths of virtue ? Or can any thing be more engaging, than to obey the commands of God, and the rules prefcribed by juftice, in concurrence with our real intereft ? Since the reward of the duty we difcharge, in paying obedience both to God and reafon, is no lefs than eternal glory ; we are not follicitous to know what good or ill fortune may befall us, becaufe every good perfon may calculate his own nativity. They who weigh their actions by the balance of juftice need not be apprehenfive of its rigour ; but, as the feveral roads that lead to glory meet at her throne, fo the various ways of voluptuousnefs lead us to deftruction : A good life, through the merits of Chrift, is the only happy one.

Let a man be as great as his ambition can afpire to, all his grandeur will not procure him felicity. He may indeed gratify his fenfes by the pomp of his attendance ; but he cannot remove the inquietude that
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disturbs his soul : The envy his magnificence creates to the world will soon change into compassion, unless true glory be made his object. The want of riches is much more beneficial to us than the enjoyment of them, unless we bestow them to a good purpose ; and, seeing the mercy of employing them wisely is never given to those who have acquired them by unlawful means, so the abuse of them is the beginning of sorrows to them amidst their unjust possessions, whilst God reserves their further punishment to himself in hell. There is a great difference betwixt the good we do, and the goods or possessions we acquire : The first proves our comfort by the complacency it affords, and the hopes it gives us ; the last our affliction, by the care that attends, and the pain that succeeds them. Let us be rich in good works, because these can (through the merits of Christ) enrich us for ever. Gold and silver we must leave behind us on the earth which has produced them, they being part of its substance. Should a sinner live to see

all his wishes accomplished, he would continue unhappy, because he would still be sinful; the very remembrance of the ills he has committed would not suffer him to relish the blessings of life; for, as tranquillity of soul depends not on riches, they cannot contribute towards it; this must be our own work, and ought to be the more valued by us, since at the end thereof we find also the end of our wishes, because there is nothing desirable beyond it. It is a strange blindness to prize life so highly, and at the same time not to reflect on its short continuance. Whilst we are counting the hours by the clock, or looking in our almanack, the time flies away without notice; and, being once gone, is irrecoverable. Not, but that there is some satisfaction in growing old; but a long life, unless attended with tranquillity, can be acceptable to none, and that must owe its origin to the repose of our mind; this we must labour incessantly to obtain, if we propose to be happy. I cannot but despise the plausible moral maxim, which tells us,
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We ought to be contented with our present enjoyments, if we are not in a capacity of obtaining more. This argument appears so weak that I cannot but raise my thoughts above it. A man may be contented with his present condition, but this content should be owing to another principle than necessity, because the lesser or higher degree of satisfaction can add nothing to our repose, if it be not the product of a good conscience. Good or ill fortune are things indifferent to an upright man; he lives from day to day without thinking one his own, and days of plenty and scarcity are equally welcome to him, for his thoughts are engaged in pursuing the right path he walks in, that he may see his pains rewarded after he has finished his course.

The pleasures of the body more sensibly affect us than those of the soul, because our senses first experience them; but, reason being much more to be relied on than they, a rational man may always be convinced, that those of the latter are attended with such delights as infinitely surpass the others.

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Bodily pleasures (though ever so various) are all of the same stamp, in respect either of their false appearances, or the bitterness that attends them, because they always leave behind a certain and pungent remorse of having mistaken them for true ones. It is far otherwise with the pleasures of the soul ; they are always the same, either with regard to their unchangeableness, or the sweets that continually attend them : But, as the repose of our mind is the most valuable of all, having a power to allay the hurricanes of our passions, we should long for nothing so much as to obtain it, being convinced, that the want thereof is the cause of all our inquietude.

What can be more beneficial to us in this world, than to wish for nothing that belongs to it ? Is it not true content to see all our desires accomplished, and all our hopes brought to a period ? This is the happiness that results from repose of conscience ; they who enjoy it look upon every thing with the same eye, with the same face, and without changing countenance ; because a
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mind well fixed, and a constant heart, hears good and bad news, without being overjoyed at the one, or dejected by the other.

This is the glorious lot of those souls, who, guided by the light of mercy and reason, never stray from the path of righteousness, whilst they are hastening to the grave; and as, whilst they are drawing near death, they have always eternity in view, where they shall for ever enjoy satisfaction and peace, their conscience gives them a foretaste of the sweets they will inherit in full plenty hereafter. I would not in this point have any one rely merely on the strength of reason, but rather be convinced of this truth by his own experience, which will leave him no room to doubt of it; let him only make trial of it for a moment, for the least enjoyment of tranquillity will cause him ever after to dread his inquietude. As the desire of our salvation is the only object that can fill the soul with joy, so the dread of damnation ought to be the only thing capable of filling our hearts with fear and horror; and we ought to put a high value
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upon the repose of our mind, because it makes us at once sensible of our hopes of salvation, and diminishes the apprehension of our eternal loss. For this, St. Austin prayed to God for power to love him with all his heart for one moment only, conscious that he should carry that love along with him to his grave. We must beg the same mercy from God, viz. the enjoyment of a pure conscience for as little as he shall think fit, because during that time, though ever so short, we should be convinced that there is no way of living contentedly without fearing him, nor of dying happily without loving him. All disorders of life proceed from our being mistaken in its true nature; not that a man can be ignorant that he is mortal; but he so seldom reflects upon that truth, and as it were only by the by, that the time of his life slides away, and he finds himself at the end of his journey, which he has finished to his shame, and repents in vain of his miscarriages.

It is a received opinion, that examples tend more to our instruction than good precepts;

cepts ; but we see every day such as are much younger than ourselves die before us, yet are we never the wiser for it ; and it happens to our great misfortune, that the last and most fatal experience instructs us to no purpose, since the light it gives us is not strong enough to penetrate through that cataract that has taken away our sight, unless it be at the very last minute of our life. Were we secure to live for an age, and at the same time sensible of the satisfaction arising from a good life, we should not delay a moment to begin the important work ; yet, considering we know not how long we have to live, and are sensible of it, it must rather be for want of reason than good will, that we do not secure ourselves against the fear of damnation, since beyond that we have nothing else to dread. The uncertainty of the continuance of life is an excellent school for those to be taught in who are capable of reflecting duly upon the matter to their own advantage, by avoiding the irreparable loss that may befall them. He that makes it his study how to live will soon be a good proficient

ficient in the art of dying ; and, having gained this point, need wish for no more, either in this or the world to come. We need not look on our watches, or in our almanacs, to remind us of mortality ; the breath we continually draw is a faithful monitor : strange it is, that, being so convincing, it should not more sensibly affect us. Each of our senses takes their leave of us (as it were by turns) almost every moment : And, seeing their virtue and strength fail us gradually, ought not this decay to engage us to be beforehand with them, that our soul may bid them farewell first, and relinquish them without regret ?

They who die daily, with the apostle, never die ; we cannot exempt ourselves from the grave after death, unless we go thither whilst we are alive ; not but that we must die as well as others, and be buried as they are ; but our death changes its name by changing its nature : Our grave will be to us as a cradle, for, being sown in corruption, we shall be raised in glory. The only way to be saved, is, to think

think continually on our salvation; and, these thoughts being always useful to us, the rest discover their own vanity; because they die, the very moment of their conception. They who are slaves to the world carry their chains along with them to the grave, and thence to hell, thereby rendering their servitude everlasting; the only way to avoid this, is, always to cleave to our duty, whereof reason being the tie, our endeavours are so just, that when time shall release us, in order to deliver us up to eternity, we shall be indissolubly connected with Him, who is the Author thereof.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

I cannot reflect on the blindness of this world without being moved to compassion, their actions and discourse are so absurd and unaccountable; they labour continually, without knowing for what; they move on without intermission, not considering whether they are to go.

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May it not reasonably be concluded, that the greatest part of mankind know not what they affirm ? They talk of nothing but buying and selling commodities, as if a man could attain happiness by such a traffic as this ; is it not apparent, that they are ignorant of their true business, when they spend their time in acting quite contrary to that duty, which of necessity they must discharge, if they intend to be saved ? Surely they never consider to what place they are going, since, though they draw every hour nearer the grave, they care not to hear any one speak of death, as though it were not inevitable.

Every one talks of what concerns him ; the one material concern is that of our salvation ; we are always busy, let us make a wise choice of such business as may turn to a good account ; we are upon the road towards death, let us always have in view and continually endeavour, at the end of this arduous course, to carry off the prize ; whatsoever falls short of this is useless, all
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our other labours are in vain, and all our other thoughts without effect.

Since our life is a continual death, let us always be in a state of preparation for the final summons; and so much the more, because we shall die but once, and the last moment of our life will either give to or take from us the crown of eternal glory.

C H A P. XII.

We need only consider how to live well, that we may die happy, because in this consideration consists the supreme felicity of man.

THE thoughts of a traveller should be occupied in the due consideration of means for arriving safely at his journey's end; and, since our travels are ultimately directed to the grave, let us keep in view at every step the end of our course, that we may render it the less difficult, by the hopes of bringing it to a happy period. I am sensible it is not very easy to taste the sweets of an agreeable repose, whilst we are continually

tinually in action, and that we cannot meet with the tranquillity we seek below, whilst we are treading that difficult path ; but we ought to consider, That our very endeavours to discharge our duty are accompanied with such an agreeable satisfaction as counterbalances the pain ; because there is no less pleasure in doing good, than in receiving the reward of it. As the huntsman relishes his pleasure of following the prey by his eagerness in taking it, so the hopes of putting a check to and conquering our passions form the delight of our life : If our strongest passion is to cleave to the world, our greatest satisfaction should proceed from a resolution of subduing it ; and the more, because the further we remove from it, the nearer we shall approach to our desired felicity ; and the more we learn to despise what the world can give us, the more we shall raise ourselves above it. This degree of exaltation will lay a permanent foundation for our repose.

Nothing can be more rational, than to consider what we are doing, in order to do well ;

well; for, all the world being desirous of a happy death, which must be preceded by a good life, in vain we wish for either, if we make not due reflection upon both: Our life cannot be happy but by the felicity we propose to ourselves from a virtuous life, and the end must crown all our actions. What benefit would it be to us always to walk upon roses, if the prickles wound our feet? Is it not much more proper to gather them into a nosegay, to be revived by their odoriferous scent while it lasts, and remember it with pleasure when gone? The sweet scent of an innocent life is so delicious, that it penetrates by an almost divine virtue into the very heart, and causes us to relish such pleasures as are not to be represented but by our thoughts.

There is no other paradise upon earth, but that of a good life, that we may die happily; all other pleasures have only the bare name, being altogether imaginary. Even the enjoyment of health is frequently attended with a certain inquietude, caused by the fear of future sickness. If we are
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ever so fortunate, inasmuch as we are beholden for it to time, its constant changeableness enables us to foresee, in the midst of our enjoyments, the misfortune of being deprived of them. We should therefore wean ourselves from the love we bear to every thing here below, because we have only the use of it for a time; and, the due improvement of our time having a constant relation to eternity, every moment ought to be equally precious to us; and the more, because the last of our life will make us either happy or miserable. Do we not observe our lungs to be like a watch? They shew the minutes every time they breathe, till the clock of our last hour strikes, to call us away, which, for aught we know, may be the present. I do not wonder Providence thought fit to order it so, and left the time of our departure unknown to us, that we might be always ready. What a satisfaction is it to be continually taken up in making preparations for our departure, without fixing our thoughts on any thing else! Do not imagine the thoughts of a
virtuous

virtuous soul are attended with sadness, since it meets with satisfaction in them, because they tend to her benefit. What can be conceived more agreeable or more beneficial, than spending one's time in gaining eternity? We go on with pleasure, when, after reason has shewn us the way we must take, she enlightens our steps. Fear not the danger, you need not apprehend any thing whilst you are under the conduct of Providence. If the road seems troublesome to-day, you have reason to hope it may prove better to-morrow; for, in keeping constantly in your road, you may meet with a more agreeable climate and country.

The sun is no less to be admired at the time of his rising, than at setting; and, if by the changeableness of time he is now and then covered with clouds, this proves no diminution to his lustre, because it is natural to him. It is just so with a good soul, which you see pressing forward with an even pace towards the grave, where she is to finish her career; and, however fortune
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may attempt to disturb her repose, she remains immoveable, and stands firm on the foundation she herself has fixed in the pursuit of virtue. Let our life be ever so long, it appears of so short a duration, after it is past, that we dare scarce think of it ; so true is it, that we ought to esteem it only as a dream : We make but an ill use of our reason, if we do not hasten our pace towards that abode wherein we are to continue for ever ; since our life terminates in death by a necessity and inviolable laws, he must certainly be divested of reason, who is so remiss as not to consider his condition as mortal, and himself as one who must give an account of the deeds done in the body. The sun by his light shews us every day our road, from the cradle to the grave ; but, whilst we are treading the footsteps of those who are gone before us, our mind should be convinced of its frailties, by the testimony of our senses, as often as we are forgetful of our true state. You will perhaps say, how is it possible we should forget it ? We are daily invited to the funerals

als of our relations and friends, till others come to ours : But it is very requisite we should consider, that it is not enough for us to know that our death is unavoidable, but that it is absolutely necessary also ; we should represent to ourselves, that the death, which will succeed a mis-spent life, will be everlasting, unless by timely repentance and amendment of life we endeavour to avoid it.

Life cannot be pleasing unless not attended with sensible hopes of a happy death ; by such hopes as prompt us to employ our best endeavours to attain it ; we shall never succeed in this, except we make that happy death the sole object of all our thoughts and actions. The whole world is fond of a long life, but to live longer or shorter avails little ; if, whilst we discharge our duty, life be protracted for many years, we must cast them up with the more exactness, because they are to be audited by a Judge, with whom no corruption can take place. I am sensible it will be difficult to persuade you, that the thoughts of our latter end

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have more sweet than bitter in them to a virtuous mind ; but, if we reflect, that our life is momentary, and that, during the small time of its duration, we may every instant expect the decision of our everlasting fate, it naturally follows that a rational man should delight in meditating continually on the things whereon his salvation depends. If he is so unhappy as to doubt of it, let him be convinced by the undeniable testimonies of those who die before him, and he will learn from their last words, that the felicity of life consists in making death familiar to our thoughts. We exclaim against the disobedience of our first parents, because thereby posterity was deprived of the advantages God had designed them : But He, whose justice and mercy are infinite, has thought fit to impart to all the favour of allowing them to live in the paradise of this world, under this restriction, not to transgress his commands, which are the forbidden fruits thereof. And what great reason of complaint have we now ? Knowing the errors of our first parents, this knowledge

ledge ought to instruct us, the example of their chastisement rendering this instruction absolutely necessary. He that either submits to, or transgresses the divine laws, will have his reward or punishment accordingly; and herein God makes us sensible of his infinite mercy, because after having by his own blood washed away the sin of our first parents, he causes their posterity to enjoy the liberty of a free-will, that, after having satisfied his justice, they might be indebted to his mercy for their salvation.

Every one, by the grace of God, may live in the paradise of this world in the same primitive innocence as our first parents did; they may feed upon all the fruits God has planted, provided they forbear to taste those he has forbidden.

Let us reap benefit from the misfortunes of others, by avoiding to stumble on the stone that crushed others before: Since we now live in the paradise of the world, let us submit to the laws prescribed to us, that we may meet with life in death. If the thoughts thereof trouble us, let us con-

sider them as the necessary means to obtain our supreme felicity; that our hearts may sigh without intermission for the happiness they hope for, and will admit of nothing less than God, who has given them their being. When once we live for eternity, this life will not be troublesome to us; and it will afford the highest satisfaction to finish our course with the hopes of seeing ourselves recorded in the annals of the just. Those who doubt, whether there be a hell, need only consult their own consciences. The constant disturbance they meet with there will teach them, that the torments of the damned are of the same nature, because they continue for ever, without seeing the all-avenging hand that afflicts them. Every sinner makes his sins a hell unto him, and, without executioner or execution, finds himself seized every hour with a kind of death more dreadful than death itself. It is not enough to think of doing well. Hell contains a vast number of those who have conceived many good desires, and who have even died with the will to put them in execution.

execution. We shall be rewarded through the merits of Christ ; not but that a fervent desire of amendment, joined to a sincere repentance of our past transgressions, may be acceptable to God, even though we may want means to put them in execution ; but, if we let slip the opportunities that are offered to us, this will tend to aggravate our offence ; and our will, after such a neglect, is insufficient of itself to satisfy the justice of God, which looks upon the effects and not upon words ; for they will avail us nothing. What frail thoughts, what vain desires, do not men conceive daily, in relation to a happy life ! Paradise is not to be obtained by the zeal of our will ; we must purchase it by actions wrought in grace ; these deserve to be rewarded. It is true, our will must precede our actions, and we have gained a great point when we take a final resolution of serving God ; but, unless this will justifies itself every moment, our inability of putting it in execution, through delay, becomes a new sin, which draws on our head a new punishment. To

be always willing to do well, and to omit it when we are able, is to heap sin upon sin, to our certain and eternal confusion and punishment. It is not sufficient to have good thoughts, or a good will, we must not stop here ; paradise is not the reward of thoughts or intentions ; we must set our hand to the plough, we must finish our course, if we expect to receive the crown at the last day.

We do not labour for another, but for our own benefit only : the happiness of this reflection is so charming, that, which way soever we consider it, we are convinced that one day it will be our exceeding great reward ; it not only ravishes with joy the mind which bends its thoughts upon it, but also fills a heart which sighs after it with fresh charms and pleasures every moment. The man, that lives with no other intent than to do his duty, lives an immortal life, a life that participates more of what is heavenly than mortal ; for, in living thus, he fixes himself in a paradise here below, the felicities whereof are beyond expression. Happy is
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he who can attest it by his own experience, he need wish for nothing else. Never any one who entered the path, in pursuit of virtue, was seen to turn his back to her: if you happen to see some turn from her on the road, after having for a season traced her steps, be not much surprized thereat, because they followed her doubtless rather for their own, than for virtue's sake; and so their object was contrary to their actions. The pursuit of virtue is so glorious, that we must rather be destitute of reason, than of a good will, not to make it everlasting; and to love virtue with all our heart, but for one moment, is sufficient to endear her to us for ever; she never made an inconstant lover, for, as knowledge precedes love, so those who are once perfectly acquainted with her will love her to perfection.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Death appears so terrible at first sight to those who never think of it, that I do not wonder if they tremble at its approach;

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but, when by the strength of reason rather than of courage we have made death familiar, by constantly meditating on it we change his dreadful shape, and cause him to appear so agreeable, that, were we permitted to wish for him, we should rather sigh for love than fear of him.

No man can ever relish the sweets of life, unless he thinks of the bitterness of death ; if we can hardly be induced to believe this truth, let us consider within ourselves, that death has his charms as well as life ; and that the latter cannot be pleasing, without assured hopes that the former will prove happy to us : Wherefore, if we hope to be always happy, we must continually meditate on our latter end.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIII.

All our study ought to be to attain to the knowledge of our salvation, that we may live contentedly, and die happily.

THE sciences of this world are altogether vanity, and must be set aside, after we have been instructed in them, that we may recommence our studies in the school of virtue, for this alone can teach us the way of salvation. It is vain to turn over a great many books, that of heaven is the most beneficial to us; and those that spend their time in the contemplation of its miracles, always visible, and always incredible, may justly call themselves learned.

Ye astrologers! your science is useless to a good man, for his probity makes his horoscope. Ye divines! he that lives and dies in the faith of Christ knows the best precepts you can give him. Ye philosophers! you are soon silenced in your arguments by a wise and good man, because he has

learned to argue for no other end than to follow the dictates of reason. Ye mathematicians! you cannot deny but that the rule of holy living is more exact than your rule and method of proportion. Ye lawyers! justice being nothing else but a firm and continued will of giving every one his due, he that loves his neighbour as himself puts in practice the law you teach, without having frequented your academies. Ye physicians! the art of preserving the health of the soul has the preference to that of curing the diseases of the body.

These maxims teach us, that the knowledge of living well makes us learned both in this and the other world, because it is the science of eternity. What good will it do us, to be foretold by the rules of astrology the misfortunes that may befall us, if we cannot avoid everlasting destruction? Since all the divinity we are required to know is comprehended in God's commandments, we need only believe and obey, to make ourselves great divines, without spending much study in that science. True philosophy

sophy consists in despising the things of the world, this neglect being much more beneficial than the knowledge thereof. We shall reap much higher advantages in following the rules of our duty, than the maxims of mathematicians. Our benefit will be much greater, if we walk in the path of justice, than if a man commences Doctor of the Laws; and let a physician boast ever so much of his experience, it will be much more glorious to us to cure the frailties of our minds, than to ease the pains of our bodies.

Let us further consider, that, if astrology foretels us the good and ill fortune of our life by the different aspect of the stars, our conscience feels the effects thereof by its repose or disquiet. Divinity teaches us the attributes of God; it is sufficient to know that he is infinitely just and merciful, that we may invoke his mercy, and dread his justice. Philosophers may enlighten our minds by the knowledge of the wonders of this world, but it is far better to know its miseries than perfections, that we may not set our hearts upon it. All the mathematicians in
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the world are not capable of teaching us how to measure the little space betwixt life and death; this would be a thing worthy and beneficial to be known, that we might be always prepared for, and not be surpris'd at, the moment of our departure. He that does wrong to nobody may be deemed a learned lawyer, whether he has studied the law or not. We ought to make use of physic for the preservation and recovery of the health of our bodies; but this transitory life was given us, to secure therein an everlasting one in heaven.

All the doctors of divinity, law, and physic, are ignorant men, if they are unskilled in the art of our salvation; as this knowledge has no less than eternity in prospect, it makes us in time forgetful of all the rest. All sciences have truth for their object, and as, after we are dead, we shall know no other than that of our salvation or destruction, we may now avoid the latter by never ceasing to think of the former. St. Paul was enlightened beyond any man upon earth, by his elevation to the third heaven; and

and it is observable, that the first lesson he gave was to look for all our glory in the cross; shewing us by his own example, that our sufferings are an infallible means to bring us to the port of a happy eternity. Our Saviour himself traced out the way, when he ascended Mount Calvary. If it be true, that a wise man will never leave to chance what he can lose but once, so the very thought of committing our salvation to the hazard of fortune should be more dreadful to us than hell itself, since the danger incurred, and the evil that follows, are incurable and past resource.

Ye mathematicians! in vain do you labour to find out the quadrature of the circle; all your pains will avail nothing, unless you endure the cross: he that suffered himself to be crucified for us has left infallible rules behind him. Ye lawyers! know that the disciples of the cross are much better learned in the laws than you are, because they practise the precepts prescribed to them by justice herself. Ye physicians! your prescriptions are useless to
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those that make profession of bearing the cross ; for this is the true balm for their wounds, and the sovereign remedy against all evils.

We ought to confine our knowledge to what is necessary to salvation ; all the rest is but a fable, which will make us ashamed, when we are at the point of death, of having filled our heads with vain sciences, which we have learned with a great deal of pains, but very little profit. Ye learned of this world ! all your arguments will only serve to prove your weakness, if you do not submit to truth, and confess that you have nothing that you can call your own, but ignorance, sin, and death ; and these three being the products of darkness, which inseparably attend them, you will die in your blindness, unless you confess your errors with a submissive heart. As soon as the soul is separated from the body, it remembers nothing but the good and evil done in the body, because we shall be rewarded for the one, and punished for the other, to all eternity. And, since the last moment of our
life.

life determines our fate, be it our chief study to redeem the time, since all our felicities or misfortunes depend upon the use we make of it. All the knowledge of life consists in leading a good life; what advantage will it be to speak various languages, if we are ignorant of the language of reason? Hell abounds already with those unhappy doctors, who have followed no precept but those of their own vanity, having neglected the art of procuring the salvation, which is preferable to all other sciences.

It is more glorious to frequent the churches than schools, and the best study is that of the oracles of God. This in our solitude may stand us in good stead, and make our prayers serve us in lieu of lessons, to admonish us to seek only after one truth in this world, which is its vanity, every thing else being imaginary and in appearance, except sin, pain, and death, which are inseparable. Our aversion to ill, and our love of good, may render us well skilled in the practice of those habits we never contracted before; not that it is unlawful to frequent
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the schools, or make use of domestic precepts, to instruct us in the profession we are designed for ; but, Christianity being the chief, we must preserve its character in its true purity, because we shall carry it beyond the grave. When we are at the point of death, we shall not be asked, whether we have studied the laws with success, but rather whether we have done justice to all men. As the knowledge of living uprightly comprehends all other sciences, so a man, who dies master of that only, may be truly called a learned man. The worldly sciences commonly fill our minds with vanity, rather than true knowledge. Therefore let us study nothing but the science how to procure our salvation, this being the way to make us wise both in this and the other world.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

In order to die well, we must first study how to live well ; this is the science leading to eternity, all the rest being vain and unpro-

unprofitable. He that knows how to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himself, knows every thing he need be instructed in for his salvation.

C H A P. XIV.

The happy life and solid tranquillity of a just man.

HOW happy is the life of a righteous man! how infinite his tranquillity? judge of the felicity of the latter, since God himself lays the foundation; and you may compare the felicity of the first to the life of angels: What can be conceived more agreeable or more glorious in the pursuit of virtue, than to taste all her pleasures, all her rewards here, and keep in possession of them to all eternity? This is the real lot of a just man. His object being true good, and his aversion what is ill, his soul enjoys that tranquillity she has acquired to herself, being insensible of her passions, except when she triumphs over them. He is sensible of pain, but deaf to the temptations of voluptuousness.

tuousness. He is always struggling with fortune; but, his hopes of obtaining the victory overbalancing the pains he takes in the combat, he reaps tranquillity as the fruit of his labour, and, during his imaginary inquietude, is sensible of true contentment. Every thing smiles to his desires, because they are confined within the bounds of justice; every undertaking prospers according to his wishes, because they never exceed the limits of reason; and his attempts in this kind are always attended with success, because his preceding submission prepares the way for it. Let fortune turn its wheel which way soever it will, it tends to his advantage, which is the greater, the more real he thinks it to be. Does time change its face? it is agreeable to him; he looks upon it with an unruffled countenance. He relishes sickness as well as health, because illness enables him to exercise his patience; whatever affliction befalls him, either by loss of his possessions, or relations, he pronounces the judgment which Providence has given according to

to his sovereign will, comforting himself, and constraining nature to be contented with the tears she causes him to shed, because he has no more to give her. Whatever his station be, he studies nothing so much as to discharge his duty, and find his repose in it. Having no other object in view than true good, that is his only reward in this world, in certain hope that the same will crown his works in the world to come. A greater or lesser share of the gifts of fortune does not constitute his tranquillity, being contented with what he enjoys; and, without carrying his projects beyond his sphere, he endeavours to fill it up worthily, that no vacuum may be found in the orb God has been pleased to assign him; knowing it is allotted him by the sovereign power of Providence. If he finds himself surpris'd by necessity, he looks upon it with indifference; he is scarce sensible of it, because he never wants what is necessary; and, though there be but a momentary interval betwixt his plenty and scarcity, he trusts he shall be always contented.

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Supposing him overburthened with a numerous family, and that the misfortunes of their lives render his industry fruitless for their subsistence ; conscious that he, who has charged him with this burthen, has weighed it before he laid it on his shoulders, he fears not to sink under its weight ; but says with Job, after he had been abandoned by his wife, That, though God slew him, yet he would trust in him. A righteous man uses the same language ; not but that hope is the main security of his future good sentence ; but, let this future good expectation be ever so overcast with darkness, he dispels the clouds by the light of faith, which renders the good he desires present to him : so that he enjoys beforehand the felicities he desires, because he knows they cannot fail. In this innocent way of living, he grows old with such delight, that he numbers his days with the utmost satisfaction, waiting for the moment of his departure without impatience ; and, as he takes leave of the world every minute, by breaking those ties which might detain him either
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in thought or will, he discovers by degrees that desirable haven, whither time is to convey him to an eternity of inconceivable joy and bliss.

MORAL REFLECTIONS.

Can any one possibly doubt the existence of hell and heaven, whilst the troubles and repose of our consciences make us sufficiently sensible of the torments of the one, and the happiness of the other? The generality of the world being an evidence in behalf of this, it must be taken for an unquestionable truth.

A just man has the advantage of tasting beforehand the pleasures of the paradise he expects to enjoy, by that satisfaction the tranquillity of his conscience imparts to his soul. All his wishes being centered in God, he finds his presence every-where, and sees, in seeing him, his utmost desires accomplished. An impious man, on the other hand, has the misfortune to feel beforehand the pains of hell, wherewith his sins threaten him;

him; as his conscience is never at rest, so it keeps him constantly in that place of torment, God permitting that it should be at once his punishment and executioner. This obliges me to admonish my reader to lead a blameless life, if he hopes to enjoy felicity in this world, and glory in that which shall never end.

C H A P. XV.

*Containing some reflections upon this treatise,
that we may improve it to our advantage.*

SINCE all the happiness of life consists in a happy death, our thoughts, words, and actions should have no other object than to live well, that we may die happy. Whatsoever our imagination is capable of conceiving is nothing but pain and trouble, unless we make eternity our whole delight. A million, nay, an hundred millions of ages of felicity must have an end, because we count the minutes of them; but, when we reflect on an eternity of happiness.

ness, on an eternity of glory, on an eternity of peace and rest, we must certainly misconceive or be strangers to our own interest, if we despise the possession of these glorious things, which are to be everlasting. One thinks only of riches, which pass away like a dream, because he cannot carry them with him to the grave. Another devotes himself to fortune, ascends to the highest pinnacle of dignity; and, the very moment he possesses it, another succeeds, and puts a period to his poor enjoyments by some unforeseen accident. A thousand years are as nothing when they are gone; wherefore, seeing every thing is transitory, let us fix our mind inseparably on that sovereign Being, who exists for ever, by such actions as will immortalize themselves. Let us leave to Providence the disposal of time, and let us improve that which is given to us; as both good and evil come from heaven, let us receive them with equal composure and resignation.

Since it is appointed for all to die, let us sweeten the harshness of this necessity by leading a life more agreeable than death is terrible.

terrible. This is the way to be Happy and Contented. After having made my observations upon the world, under different circumstances, for the space of fifty years, I think myself happy in having so far attained to the knowledge of it, as to be able to communicate it to others ; because a perfect acquaintance therewith, and a despicableness of it when known, are inseparably connected. All its pleasures are imaginary, but its pains sensible. All the felicities it holds forth to our acceptance are merely nominal, whereas the evils produced by the love of it pierce us through with many sorrows. Hope is the pledge of the repose it promises, but is not able to give us ; and fear always attends what we enjoy, being of momentary duration. That worldly grandeur we so much affect bears only a false lustre, having nothing real in it, but is only an external appearance. May these truths, which cannot but be as obvious to our minds as the day-light to our eyes, serve as a light to guide us to tranquillity ; to lay hold of time as it comes
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to our hands; to follow the path reason shews us; to live in the enjoyment and fear of God only, because the love and fear of him will create both our earthly and heavenly paradise. Consider therefore, that the whole world is a chimera, nothing being certain therein but death.

Here sin causes all our misfortunes, and the want of confidence in Providence all our miseries; here we never taste pleasures but in imagination, but are actually sensible of pain. Here all things grow old whilst we are looking on them, and the harmony of praises we give to each other loses itself in the air. The rich have the worst lot of all, because, while they go on in quest of an imaginary paradise, in the possession of their riches, they meet in the end a real hell, by the ill use they have made of them. The poor murmur without reason against their lot, which they complain makes them miserable: affluence of fortune is not the standard of the Lord's dwelling-place. Ten years of pain, or of pleasure, are the same when they are past, with re-

spect to the time. As good actions are always attended with the satisfaction of a reward, so evil ones are never without fear of punishment. Be not tired with living well, or dying well; a good life always carries its own tranquillity along with it; and the very remembrance of a good action charms our mind. The satisfaction which remains to us, upon our death-bed, of having led a good life, will affect us beyond all the pleasures we have enjoyed in our life-time. Every one is anxious to make his fortune in this world, which is only temporary, few making it their business to attain happiness in the next, where they are to live for ever. How often soever fortune may change its face, let us always look upon it with the same countenance, that so we may be fixed above it; it is more glorious to despise than to possess riches. The end of our life is the end of the world, with respect to ourselves; and the day of our death the day of judgment; and it is impossible we should be unmindful of eternity, when we consider, that we can neither avoid,
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nor fly from it, because the time which conducts us to the grave, as well as death, are equally infallible, and will deliver us up to that Being with whom there is no variability, or shadow of turning. The world deceives such as give ear to her, and fortune those that follow her steps. Voluptuousness always produces unhappiness, and ambition nothing but misery. Death, the thoughts whereof prove a hell, even here, to the rich, is a comfort to the poor, whose victorious patience below prepares the way for their triumphs above.

It is in vain to search after tranquillity, unless we look for it in God, since he alone can give it. As soon as you fix your eyes on him, you will despise every sublunary thing; from that moment you begin to love him, you will forget every thing you loved before; and, when your desires are directed towards him, you will renounce all the pretensions you ever had to any thing else in this world. These are self-evident truths, and convince at once both our minds and senses; experience itself contradicts the in-

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crudulous. I cannot but detest the malicious and voluntary blindness of those who deny it to be day while the sun shines. There can be no greater sin than obstinately and designedly to call in question a truth clearer than the sun, and convincing in itself. God has annexed so great a satisfaction to the mind that loves and fears him, that this love and fear create an earthly paradise; and I am surpris'd this should admit of the least doubt, because nothing is more easy than to try the experiment; and this trial will fully convince him that makes it.

All are desirous of the tranquillity of this life, yet none will consider of the means to obtain it. True peace consists in this, that we commit no offences against God; this he renders so sensible to us, that of necessity our heart must be engaged by the satisfaction it finds therein, if it resists not that reason which ought to instruct it. Dear reader, consider these things well, and let not this treatise at the great day reproach thee to thy confusion, with having despised the advice

vice I give thee, to procure thy own happiness both in this and the world to come, by a firm resolution never to offend God ; I say by an invariable resolution ; for, as that begins the work of this innocence and happiness, so the grace of God through Jesus Christ will accomplish and crown it with eternal felicity. But let us remember, that as our soul can be happy in nothing but God, we must fill it beforehand with the love and fear of him ; that so, loving him with all our heart, desiring and fearing nothing besides him, our mind may be free from all inquietude.

Resolve, therefore, with an unshaken resolution, never to offend God by any wilful sin, nor to refuse alms to the poor he sends thee. Thou wilt perhaps think this will impoverish thee ; but, since God himself receives those charitable gifts thou bestowest upon the poor, he engages, when he accepts of them, to restore them to thee again, which thou hast not the least reason to doubt of, because Truth itself has promised it. I will not set any measure nor

price upon thy charity and alms ; it is enough for thee to give according to thy ability, provided thy heart is readier to do it than thy hand. No man was ever known to grow poor by having done acts of mercy to the needy ; this kind of charity cannot be repeated to excess. Do not be so far biassed by self-love as to be sollicitous upon this account concerning what will become of thy children : you cannot put your money into better hands, than into those of God Almighty ; for, instead of becoming bankrupts, we shall receive the interest beforehand, and with so much profuseness, that it amounts to more than the principal debt.

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REFLECTIONS

UPON DIVERS

MORAL SUBJECTS.

CHAP. I.

Of the nature of man.

MAN being composed of soul and body, these are united by an unknown and incomprehensible connection. The soul is of an intelligent nature, capable of good and evil, of happiness and misery. The body is an engine, consisting of an infinite number of organs and channels, proper to produce an infinite diversity of actions and motions. This engine has such a vast variety of parts, of vessels and muscles, that the smallest thing may

discompose it, and hinder its motion. They who are acquainted with its structure are so far from wondering that men die so soon, that they are rather surpris'd how they can live so long as they generally do. How stupendous soever this machine of man's body may be in itself, the consideration of its weakness, the many infirmities it is liable to, and its short duration (since death will ere long destroy that glorious disposition and most admirable composure of its parts) should disentangle the soul from that slender portion of matter unto which it is joined for a short season, and prevent her becoming a slave to that body she has a right to govern, and which ought to submit to her obedience.

God has joined the spirit of man to a particle of that matter whereof all the corporeal substances of the universe are composed; and that enables him to have a great influence upon that portion of matter, wherewith he is united, because he animates and gives it motion and life. This spirit should be united unto God in a much stricter,

stricter manner, being created after the image of God, who is the principle and end of his being, and who has made him, in order to be known and loved by him. But this union of the spirit with God, being impaired by sin, has strengthened the tie between that and the body. The miseries, unto which the body is reduced, has engaged the soul to enter into a stricter union with it; the weight of concupiscence draws her so strongly towards corporeal objects, that she is not in a condition to raise herself towards God, unless assisted by the grace and merits of our Saviour. This produces all the errors of the spirit, and all the corruption of the heart; the spirit, judging of things no farther than as they have a relation to our senses, fixes his choice according to the tendency of our passions and senses, and unfortunately stops by the way, so that he either knows not God, or, if he has in part, instead of turning to Him, as to the principle and end of his being, he miserably loses himself in his own thoughts, according to the words of the apostle, *Who,*

when they knew God, glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, Rom. i. 21.

How many such are there in the world, who live like brutes, without making due reflection upon the nature and dignity of the soul, upon our union with our bodies, and the short space she has to remain there! How many are there, who do not in the least consider who is the Author of her, from whence she comes, and whither she is going! Those that apply their sole care to the body, which they idolize, render the soul subject to the vilest part of themselves and to their gross and brutish pleasures; thus passing away their lives, as if their soul were to be for ever united to that portion of matter which surrounds it, and never to be separated from it. What use do they make of their souls, spirits, and senses, during the short time they have to live, which is no more than a point compared to eternity, who live always in slavery to the body and its necessities, blindly following
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all its motions ? *Man, being in honour, says David, may be compared to the beasts that perish, Pf. xlix. 12.*

The greatest honour of mankind, and which infinitely raises him above the beasts, and all other even the most perfect creatures, is his being created after the image of God, and endued by his Creator with a power of knowing and loving him ; but, notwithstanding all this, man knows not, nor is sensible of, the high value of this honour ; and, instead of endeavouring to resemble his Creator, has made himself like unto the brutes, who act without knowledge or reason.

Since the Word is made flesh, and dwells among us, if we have neglected in some measure the honour of our creation, let us at least remember its value by our redemption. Let us not follow those impious reprobates, who aim at nothing but scandal, to their utter destruction. This aim is the affection they bear to every thing that may prove fatal to them : *This their way is their folly, Pf. xlix. 13.* a kind of madness which
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has possessed them with an insatiable desire of riches and glory ; these, says St. Chrysostom, are most terrible objects of scandal, and the fatal obstacles to their salvation. But what is more deplorable is, that, according to the prophet, those that have taken to this scandalous way think themselves happy in the midst of their greatest miseries, and, deeming themselves wise in the highest excess of their fatal folly, dare to extol that which causes others to shed tears. For, if it is a difficult task to avoid falling into sin, even whilst we condemn it, into what an abyss of misery will not they plunge themselves, who glory in and applaud their evil ways ? *Every man*, according to the royal prophet, *walketh in a vain shew*, Ps. xxxix. 36, as if he had said, Consider mankind on which side you will, either with respect to his nobility or his beauty, either in his great possessions or in his wit or wisdom, all is vanity, unless he regulate them according to the spirit and wisdom of God. The same prophet, extolling the grandeur of God in the heavens,

vens, takes occasion from thence to admire how so potent and exalted a spirit could so far condescend as to create such a variety of things for the sake of mankind : *Thou hast, says he, made him little lower than the angels, hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands,* Pl. v. 5, 6. Let us therefore admire, with this holy king, the heavens, moon, and stars, and that infinite number of other things which are the magnificent products of the power of God. But let us above all adore him without ceasing for that effect of his peculiar and stupendous mercy, according to which he has not only been pleased to remember mankind in Adam, whom he created so holy and great ; but also in the Son of Man, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, in so divine, and, at the same time, so merciful a manner, condescended to appear in our flesh, and suffer death for our sakes, that we might inherit eternal life.

C H A P. II.

Of the life of man.

THE life of man has its dependence on a frame so nicely contrived, and consisting of so many parts, that it is almost surprising how it should subsist, even for a small time, since the least disorder is sufficient to destroy its œconomy; from the fall of Adam to the present time, it has been an uninterrupted race to death. *When a few years are gone, then shall I go the way whence I shall not return,* Job xvi. 22. and in another place: *Seeing the days of man are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass,* chap. xiv. ver. 5. It is certain our soul is united to the body but for a small time; the stay she is to make in the body is of very short continuance, being only a passage to the boundless ocean of eternity. We draw every moment nearer and nearer to death, and cannot recover the time that is lost; we walk along the track of irrecoverable
time

time in this life, and even of this we have only a small share at our disposal, because nature necessarily robs us of a great part of it. *Thou hast made my days as an hand's-breadth*, says the royal prophet on this subject, *and mine age is as nothing before thee*; certainly every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain, Ps. xxxix. 5, 6. He cometh forth like a flower, says Job, and is cut down; he fleeth also like a shadow, and continueth not, chap. xiv. ver. 16. According to the words of king David, *Man's days are as grass, and as the flower of the field he flourisheth*; but the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more, Ps. ciii. 15, 16. Isaiah, ch. xl. 6, 7. saith, *All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, &c.* Man is brought forth from obscurity to make his appearance here like a flower that is just opening, and in a few moments afterwards disappears. Death causes him to return to his original dust; he is like a flower which yesterday looked

looked fair by its lustre, verdure and beauty, but to-morrow is dried up, and to be seen no more.

To make us sensible of the shortness of our days, let us consider every man's life with respect to eternity, and thereby see what a slender space it has; for, as every one of us consists but of a small portion of matter, and occupies but a very inconsiderable part of the earth in this vast extent of the universe, so every one has but a very short continuance of time, in reference to so many ages, and even this is limited. Time sweeps away all mankind, it passes and never returns. The life of man, though ever so long or pleasing, considered with respect to the time past and to come, will after all appear to be very short; and, according to this comparison, there will scarce be any difference betwixt a long and happy and a short and unhappy life; all passes away in an instant; pleasures, favours of fortune, disgraces, prosperities, adversities, &c. What is become of all who formerly lived under those circumstances? What is
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become of them, of their cares, occupations, pleasures, troubles, and power? Every man must die, and there is no great distance betwixt him that dies first, and he that follows him. What pleases and what disturbs us is alike of short continuance, for death puts a period in a moment to our cares and troubles. Eternity will put no distinction betwixt those who have lived either a long or a short time, betwixt the great and little, the fortunate and unfortunate. Why are we then so addicted to pride? Why so eager after pleasures, so fond of the things of this world? Why do we deceive ourselves with the hopes of a long life, since the longest is but a minute, if compared to eternity? To have seen much or little of the world is the same thing, when death places all things in a state of equality. The view of this world is always the same, there being nothing therein that is new; consequently life and death ought to be indifferent to us, as also whether we die in the bloom of youth, or in a decrepid age. There is but one thing worthy our care and desires,

desires, that is, to seek for God where-ever we go, and to submit to his will, and keep his commandments. Every thing must have a tendency to God, since sooner or later we must all appear before him; we ought therefore to have but one desire, which is to please and obey him.

C H A P. III.

Of death.

MANKIND are by the justice of God condemned to death; this sentence is daily executed on great numbers, at such an hour, and in such a manner, as God has determined. As He has noted down the minute of every man's birth, so likewise the time of his death is ordained by the same omniscient Being, and it is vain to seek for the cause of it in diseases, or other accidents; for it is appointed unto all men once to die, Heb. ix. 27. I know, says Job, xxx. 23. thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. What man is he, says the royal prophet, that liveth

liveth and shall not see death? Pl. lxxxix. 48. Death is infallible, and alike uncertain in all its circumstances, in respect to the day, place, and manner thereof. It draws, tho' insensibly, nearer and nearer every day, and never stops by the way; every step a man takes, in his life, brings him so much the nearer death. Job says, that his days are passed away swifter than the thread that is cut by the weaver's hand. When they weave cloth, they stand still at certain seasons, but time flies incessantly. When the weaver rests his hands, the work goes not forward; but as, in this life, time never stands still, so we draw nigher to our dissolution, even while we rest and while we sleep, continually hastening to our journey's end. The longer our life lasts, the more it draws towards that point when the thread is to be cut; for, in proportion as the present time passes, that which is to come grows shorter; and, during the whole course of our life, the future time is so much the shorter, in proportion to the length of time that is past.

Death,

Death, being not only infallible, but also uncertain, surprises us unawares. It surprises good men, who, after their long meditations upon death, are not always so well prepared, but that they have some inclination left for life. It alarms wicked men : *These spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave, Job. xxi. 13.* because even the continuance of the longest life is transitory, and seems no more than a point after it is past. For at the hour of death we have nothing left of all we had before, nor any thing of what is to come, because we have but a few moments to live. This therefore we must own, that a life, inclosed within such narrow limits, is actually no more than a point.

The only misfortune consists not in this, that death will overtake us, but that life is also irrecoverable ; all the faults we have committed here are past amendment : there is but one life, and one death ; if we die Christless, we shall remain so to all eternity. The longest life, when spent, will appear but of short duration, be it ever so long ;
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and we shall never return by the way we went ; not but that one day we shall resume this flesh at the resurrection, but shall not return to this troublesome mortal life, and again undergo the pain we shall have endured in this world, to obtain eternity for our reward. Since then death is as infallible as the time of it is uncertain ; since, when it surprises us, the sentence cannot be repealed ; let us live like men who are in continual expectation of it, and employ every moment of our lives in preparing for the stroke. To die is to accomplish the season allotted for our probation here, and which will never be granted a second time. This will be the last action of our life, that ought to be prepared for before the time of death comes ; for, were we to be suddenly surprised by death, we should certainly wish for more time, that we might lead a better life than we have done. Let us therefore look upon every day as the last of our life, and upon every action as though it were to be the last, which is the securest way never to be alarmed at death. We ought always
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to have death present to our thoughts, and to be vigilant in every step of life, that we may be found watching, and die in such a manner, that at the point of death we may have no reason to wish to live our days of labour and sorrow again.

C H A P. IV.

Of the effects of death.

THE first effect of death is, that it will deprive us of what we possessed here; I mean of those things that constitute the different conditions of men in the world, for death brings all to a state of equality. There is no man so poor, but after he is dead will be provided with a place where to rot in; nor can the greatest princes have more, after all their riches and grandeur, this being the only thing left them. *My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me,* says holy Job, xvii. 1.

The second effect of death is our separation from our dearest friends: this thought
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drew tears from Ezechias's eyes ; for, instead of our relations who used to cherish us, instead of our friends that used to keep us company, and instead of our servants that used to attend and respect us, we shall have no other companions but the worms, according to the words of Job : "*I have said to corruption, Thou art my father ; and to the worms, Thou art my mother and my sister,* xvii. 14. which is as much as to say, I know that mankind is the offspring of corruption, we owe our origin to it, and we bring it along with us into the world : this is visible in our bodies ; for does not our flesh proceed from corruption, and do we not become heirs thereof from our birth ?

The third effect of death is the ruin of all our projects. The rich man in the gospel had so plentiful a harvest, that he was at a loss where to preserve it, his storehouses were not large enough ; he framed vast designs in building, and spent his time in jollity and pleasures ; but God told him in the midst of all, *Thou fool, this night thy soul will be required of thee, then whose shall these*

these things be which thou hast provided?
Luke xvii. 20. *My days are past,* says Job,
my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts
of my heart, xvii. 11.

The fourth effect of death is the corruption of the body; that same body we pamper with so many delicious things, for the preserving and nourishing whereof we take so much care and pains, and even sacrifice our pleasures; for the ease of which we devote one half of our life to sleep and idleness; that same body shall be a prey to the worms. What will become of those who shew so much passion for their bodies? Ask Job, he tells them they shall sleep in dust, and be covered by the worms.

The fifth effect of death is, that we shall be forgotten. After all the pains you have taken for the glory and settlement of your family, what thanks will posterity give you? When you walk at the close of day, our body casts a longer shadow upon the ground, but who can discern the remnants of it the next day? We walk in a fair meadow covered with delicious flowers in the spring,
but

but what becomes of them at the approach of winter? When, going over a church-yard, we tread upon the ashes of thousands of dead bodies, do we so much as remember the names of a thousandth part of them? It is the last fate of man to be forgotten by men.

C H A P. V.

Of the nature of those things which we are deprived of by death.

IF we will seriously consider what it is we lose by death, and of what nature those things are which it deprives us of, it will not appear so great an evil to us. What does our loss by death amount to, either within or without us? Without, we see nothing but inconstancy, imposition, malice, contradictions, vengeance, enmity, wars. How many temptations are not we subject to from the inferior objects, though they are vain, weak, and deceitful? Within us, we are tormented by the successive motions of our passions, which are always in
K rebellion

rebellion against our peace. Death deprives us of life, but what is life? a vapour, a sort of perpetual corruption, a prison, a captivity, from which we are delivered by death, and from a continual succession of pain and misery. If we make due and serious reflections upon the events of this world, we shall find there is nothing to be met with in it but continual pains, whether in the preservation of this mortal body, continually exposed to a thousand dangers; or with respect to our friends, for fear of disobliging them; or in reference to our enemies, whose ill designs against us we have frequent reason to suspect; or perhaps on seeing ourselves at a great distance from our native country; yet after all, by reason of that blindness which deprives us of the true light of our soul, we are well pleased to live here on earth, under all these unhappy circumstances attending it.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble, Job xiv. 1. Holy Job could not have more pathetically represented to us in a few words the pains man

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is reduced to for the punishment of his sins. His life is indeed short in its continuance, but long by the multiplicity of his miseries. We feed our body with meats, for fear it should decay through want of nourishment : we cleanse it by abstinence, lest it should be overcharged by repletion. We keep it in vigour by exercise, that it may not languish for want of action ; and immediately after we give it rest, to preserve it from sinking under the burden of excessive labour. What do we intend by all these remedies against all these various inconveniencies ? Nothing else than to support our corruptible frame, that by the multiplicity of care we bestow on our bodies we may support the weight of its mutability and miseries. Every thing in this world is pain and affliction. Is not this subjection to the corruption of the flesh, to provide it with what is necessary during life, a most deplorable and miserable state ? We are obliged to provide cloaths to defend ourselves against the cold, provisions against hunger, and refreshment against the exces-

five heats. What a misery is it to lie under an obligation to preserve with so much care our health, which, notwithstanding all our precautions, will soon decay; to take so much pains to recover it after it is lost, and, after all, to be in danger of losing it every moment, after it has been recovered? Add to all this the misery of a man exiled from Heaven, who can even delight in his banishment, though overwhelmed with an infinite number of inquietudes and troubles, how much soever he may dissemble the weight thereof to himself; who is blinded in his soul, and yet fond of living in darkness and without hope to the end of his days.

Who do we part with, when we die! They are such as, being, for the most part, slaves to their passions, tyrannize over others, though they know not themselves; who, as soon as they are dead, will not be so much as remembered, and posterity will forget their very names. Can it be matter of sorrow to part with such a generation, to take pains to please them, and be praised
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by them ! How many are there in the world, that are scarce supportable in their morals or manners ! There is nothing but inconstancy in worldly things ; a great name, esteem, and reputation, having nothing of reality in them. These things, which appear to us with an uncommon lustre, and most worthy of our care and regard, are mere vanities. What end do we propose in hunting after glory and pleasures, and what fruit shall we reap of all our labour ? What is become of those great men that have been raised to the highest dignities ? or of those that were reduced to the greatest extremity of misery ? They are no more. Let us call to mind the magnificence of royal courts, which have been before our time ; the glory of the various monarchies, their laws, wars, and revolutions ; the multitudes that have lived before us, those that live in our age, and those that are likely to succeed us : let us, I say, remember their short continuance, how soon they will be forgotten by posterity, as well as their beauty, lustre, and great designs. All

these things are passed away like a vapour; and we who make this reflection are subject to the same fate with those that have preceded us. There is then nothing new on earth; every thing that has been is again, and will be renewed to the end of time. Hence we may draw this conclusion, that death, which delivers us from many miseries, and can only deprive us of such things as have no reality in them, is not in itself an evil, and therefore it is a folly to be solicitously anxious on that account, since our life is momentary, and in an instant we shall cease to be.

C H A P. VI.

Of the usefulness of thoughts on death.

NOTHING is more powerful to restrain mankind within the bounds of their duty; to enable them to judge of every thing without prejudice; to calm their passions, and wean them from the delights of this world; than the consideration of death, according

according to the words of the wise man :
Remember thy end, that thou mayest never sin.
It is certain that if, during this troublesome life, we daily considered that death will soon put an end to our cares, to our inquietudes, and all the evils we suffer, and will also ~~relieve~~ *relieve* us, in spite of ourselves, from all our labours, our love, our desires, and free us from our troubles, we should lead a much more easy, less troublesome, and less turbulent life. We should be less avaricious, less ambitious, and less concerned about misfortunes, losses and injuries, and less addicted to the enjoyment of created things. But so blind is mankind, that they keep at the utmost distance from so wholesome a thought, just as if they could annihilate the eternity that awaits them by chasing it from their thoughts. Eternity will subsist in spite of them ; it draws nearer to them, and death which opens the gate to it, will soon put them under an inevitable and dreadful necessity of knowing themselves to be either eternally happy or miserable.

Since they cannot avoid death, they think to make themselves happy by not reflecting on it; but it will be vain for us to divert our thoughts another way, all things forewarn us of our approaching dissolution; hunger, thirst, distempers, a continual decay of our bodies, and an infinite number of accidents, which daily threaten us, are like so many summons, to remind us of death. Our friends, who die at the same age with ourselves, admonish us to prepare ere long to tread the same path. Nay, every alteration we find should advertise us thereof; for life passes away by continual changes, till death puts the final period to it; we must feel the same alterations that others have seen and do see; and as they ought to improve these to their own benefit, so posterity also should benefit by theirs.

The thoughts of death are highly proper to give a man a distaste of this world, to check his pride, and inspire him with a happy fear of the judgment of God; because the death of the body, though terrible in itself, is in reality an emblem of the death

death of the soul. It is a most surprising blindness in mankind to see his life pass away continually, without thinking of his latter end, without consideration, without inquietudes, without foresight, and without fear ; blindly following all his inclinations, not reflecting on what is likely to follow, but on the contrary labouring with all his might to do those things which must render him miserable to all eternity. Who can be secure of his life for an hour ? How can a man tell but this present is his last ? Death, who threatens us every moment, will transfer us suddenly into an eternal state, either of happiness or misery. This life, which is the most frail and uncertain thing imaginable, is all that stands betwixt us and heaven and hell ; as nothing is more true, so nothing ought to be more terrible ; and yet this is the very thing we think of last of all. O death ! how bitter art thou to those who place their whole delight in riches ? But the very thoughts of death are so sweet to those who separate their minds from all visible things, and think only of invisible,

that they can truly say with the apostle, *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue even all things to himself*, Phil. iii. 21, 22.

C H A P. VII.

Of the means whereby we may meet death with comfort.

THE Pagan philosophers erred concerning the idea they had formed of death. They looked upon it as natural to mankind, all their arguments being founded on that principle. But the Christian religion teaches us quite otherwise, and makes us sensible, that death is the punishment of sin, and inflicted on men for the expiation of it, being necessary to free them from those concupiscences, without which even the saints do not live in this world: Death is an execution of a sentence, founded upon God's justice, pursuant to which all
men

men are condemned to die. Death and life therefore ought to be indifferent to us, because we should not extend our wishes beyond the divine pleasure, but live in an absolute conformity to his will; so that whenever death shall come to separate us from all earthly things, we ought to receive him with an entire submission to his commands, nay even with joy. We shall easily resign this life, when once we are willing to part with vice, and reflect upon the miseries that render it both nauseous and burdensome.

The greatest inducement, which ought to persuade us with boldness to look death in the face, is in Jesus Christ, and through his merits. If we reflect upon every thing in Christ, we shall there meet with all the comfort we can wish for. Death, considered in the divine Philanthropist, is holy and sweet; without Christ, it is dreadful in its own nature. Jesus Christ suffered death to sanctify our death and sufferings. We shall not lose the faithful for ever when they die; for at that moment the will of God is accomplished.

complished in them, and their will is altogether absorbed in his. They will then be entirely freed from sin, and made sensible of God's promise, that their sacrifice is acceptable, and that they have finished the task God had appointed them. It is a peculiar privilege belonging to Christians only, not to be afflicted at the death of the faithful, like Pagans who live without hope. Death, in respect of the effect it produces, is desirable; it delivers us from concupiscence, frees us from the opportunity of sinning, puts a period to a life corrupted by sin, takes away from the body the power of sinning, separates the soul from a body subject to sin, punishes the sinful body, and, lastly, causes our souls to abandon earth, and a life full of corruption, in order to ascend to heaven, and be reunited to God, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore!

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

Of time, and the due improvement of it.

THE greatest part of mankind so mis-employ the little time they have to live, that their whole contrivance tends only to the inventing means how to destroy it. All their care is to forget themselves, to amuse their hearts with outward appearances, and thus let their short but precious time slip away, without thinking. This is the true source of all our irregular occupations, which we call diversions; contrived on purpose to pass away time without being sensible of it, or rather without being conscious of our condition. The time of life is short and uncertain, and of that short and uncertain time no part is our own except the present, which is but a moment; and yet we seldom keep to the present, but always let our thoughts run upon the uncertain future, without reflecting on that small part which only be-
longs

longs to us : We think of what is not, and let that slip without thinking which only subsists at present. We contrive continually how to dispose of things that are not in our power ; and for a time, which we are not able to secure to ourselves : Our thoughts are always employed upon what is either past or to come, and we neglect what is present to dispose of futurities, just as if they were in our disposal ; this is the source of many disorders. The time past and to come being not in our power, we have only the present in our disposal, and in order to make the best use of it, we must every moment be employed in performing the commands of God, and in submitting to the laws of that Providence which governs all things ; God will require no more of us. We must apply ourselves to act according to our duty at present, and to check our solicitude concerning what is to come. The whole duty of man is comprehended in these three things : To do what God enjoins us to do ; to act according to his will ; and that at such a time as he has ordained : A
man.

man ought to look with an indifferent eye on all the events of life, because they are all owing to the will of God; he ought never to be idle, but at all times employed in doing good; neither is he at liberty to chuse for himself: Disgraces and misfortunes ought to be indifferent to him; nay, death itself, unto which he is condemned by the divine appointment; he must be always active in every circumstance of life, for this action consists in an entire submission to the will of God, by accepting with a free heart every thing that befalls him, even death itself.

That man must be very blind, and cannot be free from guilt, who leads an idle life; being born for action, and to serve that society whereof he is a member. Reason should engage him to be diligent in performing for laudable ends those acts which the miser, the ambitious, and the artist, who thinks of nothing but their business, and of the means to accomplish their various designs, are impelled to by their passions. All men were not made for one and the

the same thing, every one has his peculiar talent, and this talent being the gift of God, it is the duty of every man to profit thereby. Each man in his station and profession should make it his study to know the obligations and duty he lies under, in order to discharge them to the best of his power, making the glory of God and universal benevolence to men the invariable rule of his conduct. No happiness is to be expected, if we follow the motions of our passions; on the contrary, we ought rather to be apprehensive of the ill consequence thereof. To sleep, drink, and eat, are animal functions, which, being necessary, must be used with moderation; but we should not suffer these functions to render us forgetful of our duty, or prevent our knowing and accomplishing it. When we are tempted to an evil action, let us consider, that we ought neither to do or think any thing, But what might be universally known, and which we need not be ashamed to discover ourselves; this will engage us both to act and think of nothing but what is good.

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Our thoughts are often engaged on such matters as would make us blush should we discover them ; and, supposing we do not reveal them, can they escape the knowledge of God ? Does not he see the very ground of our heart ? Is he not a witness to our actions ? These considerations should suffice to keep us within the limits of our duty. Before we do any thing, or before we propose the enjoyment of any pleasure, we must examine the consequences thereof, and how far it will affect our soul ; whether it is not likely to be attended with pain and repentance, and how we have found ourselves distressed after such-like actions. As there is no worldly pleasure without bitterness, it therefore soon loses its relish ; those, who have had their full glut of sensual delights, are convinced that true felicity is not to be found either in pleasure, riches, or dignities ; but only in the practice of virtue.

The greatest part of mankind live on, without knowing what or where they are, or whither they are going. Inebriated by their passions, they insensibly pass away
their

their time in continual torments, inquietudes, and uncertainties, without any resolution to consider their latter end. Their life passes away in irregularities and unprofitable works, and in vain resolutions with regard to future events, which are beyond their power. We may perhaps be in the same, if not a worse condition, when we purpose to do a good action, since we may meet with the same obstacles as at present, and may have the same difficulties to surmount. Let us therefore embrace the present time for performing a good action, because it may perhaps be the last that will ever be in our power. God requires no more from us.

C H A P. IX.

Of the vanity and inconstancy of worldly things.

FEW arrive at the knowledge of truth, because they are not willing to search within themselves, or have recourse to due reflections and meditations. Being always
seduced

seduced by exterior objects, wherewith their senses enchant them, they judge of things, not as they really are, but as they are represented to them by their prejudiced passions, which keep them in bondage. Did we take things as they really are, and not as they appear to our deceitful senses, we should certainly avoid falling into such gross errors, inquietudes, and troubles, as we do; and what above all discovers our blindness, corruption, and erroneous sentiments, is, that experience itself is not sufficient to convince us of the contrary, even with respect to those pleasures we have so often tasted; which, though they have left nothing behind them but pain and trouble, yet we desire them with the same ardour as before, just as if we were not acquainted by experience with the ill consequences of them. This is an infallible sign, either of great want of consideration, or of a stronger corruption of heart which thus blinds us in respect to our own felicity.

To convince ourselves of the inconstancy and vanity of all things, we need only call
to

to remembrance the surprising alterations we have seen. All worldly things move in the same orb; one age follows the other, and time runs on with inconceivable rapidity: he that is alive to-day may be converted into earth to-morrow; and this earth shortly after into some other thing. Reflect on the true nature of employments, dignities, honours, and riches; on the perfection of our minds and bodies; and in short, on every thing that is in our possession—what is become of those who were masters of them; and of those who underwent so many troubles in the hopes and possession of them. All these things are the dependencies of this miserable life, which in itself depends on nothing, but is always exposed to a thousand accidents, draws every moment nearer to an end, and will soon be at its period, whatsoever care we may take to preserve it. All the objects therefore which engage men to voluptuousness, or that check them out of fear of pain, are of short continuance, as well as those which adorn them with reputation and glory; having no other foundation

foundation than our life, which is subject to sudden destruction.

Every thing that can befall a man is confined within that short space of time we have to live ; so that, since both pain and pleasure are reduced to such narrow bounds, they ought not to make so deep an impression upon our minds ; which is owing to our irregular imaginations and corrupt opinions. We judge of things quite otherwise than in reality they are ; we attribute to pleasures a quite different nature from that which they have, by the false ideas we frame to ourselves concerning them ; and we dread beforehand future evils, as if we were assured they must of necessity befall us ; we ascribe such vices as are our own offspring to other things ; we look upon those things as impossibilities which our idleness will not suffer us to attempt ; we condemn what we do not comprehend, either for want of attention, understanding, or judgment. If we reflect duly how soon every thing passes away and is buried in oblivion, on their vanity and inconstancy, we
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may easily wean ourselves from them ; we shall suffer our disgraces with patience, and shall not be so apt to be surpris'd by every think that flatters our senses, which are soon deceived by our false judgment and prejudices.

C H A P. X.

It is our duty to bear with the conduct of the wicked.

WE cannot be easily surpris'd at whatever evils we see committed, or at the follies we hear of, if we consider, that it is impossible the world should be without wicked, foolish, and impertinent men. We are convinced by our own experience, that the world is full of fools and knaves, and evil men can do no otherwise than act amiss ; a fool cannot but talk foolishly, and it is impossible an imprudent man should behave wisely, or that a knave should deal sincerely ; these act according to their character, why should we then find fault, and not be willing

ling to suffer them? God could easily destroy such men, and yet he suffers them, and gives them nourishment and light, nay, he bears with our failings, who are of the number of the wicked, that we may be thereby induced to suffer their infirmities, because it is a hard matter to bring them to reason. It behoves us, upon such occasions, to apply ourselves to the practice of those virtues which are opposite to the vices we complain of, there being no vice but what has its opposite virtue; and meekness would become useless, were it not for cholerick men. The virtues are prescribed to us, to be put in practice in opposition to vice; God, who is more offended at sinners than we, and in whose power it is to destroy them, frequently bestows long life, health, and riches upon them: We must therefore suffer, excuse, or admonish such; because each sinner is blind in his passions, and the evil he commits is, because he neither knows nor loves the truth. We should not be so sensible of other men's faults, did we reflect on our own: We frequently fall into
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the same error we condemn in others ; and, if we happen to be free from the same faults, we often have greater. If we are without pride, we may perhaps be avaricious, passionate, and voluptuous. If any one injure or offend us, let us consider, whether we never did the like to some person or other ; this is the way to banish our complaints, anger, slander, and revenge. Let us lay our obligations upon others freely, and without hopes of reward ; so shall we have no occasion to complain of ingratitude : Let us be cautious how we intrust our secrets to others, and then we shall have no reason to blame the perfidiousness of those that revealed them. Every accident and contrariety of fortune, that befalls us, should serve to exercise our reason and virtue. Whatever the world says or does, a good man will always appear as such ; he alters not his course, but acts like himself in the performance of his duty, without any regard to the ill conduct or calumnies of the wicked. Those that offend us do more harm to themselves, than to us ; for, the
more

more evil they commit, the more they increase in wickedness. They may make a noise in the world, but it is not in their power to alter us, or make us either good or bad : If they speak injuriously of us, let them talk on, whilst we continue to do our duty. To propose that a wicked man should act otherwise than he does is almost expecting an impossibility : There are certain fruits which prove always bitter, and certain ground that will produce nothing but thorns and thistles.

C H A P. XV.

Of the great work of our salvation.

WE live in this world for no other end, than by a good life to prepare for a happy eternity ; to pay to God homage, worship, and adoration. Jesus Christ in the gospel compares us to trees, and enjoins us to produce good fruit, in these words : *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

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Matth.

Matt. c. vii. ver. 19. Good works are the fruits we must produce ; Jesus Christ commands the useless servant to be cast into darkness, which should constrain us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling ; because, according to St. Peter, the *righteous shall scarcely be saved. What is a man profited, says our Saviour, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?* Mat. iv. ver. 18. And yet this most professors do, who daily risque the loss of their souls, for the enjoyment of transitory pleasures : *Wide is the gate, says our Saviour, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat ; and adds, Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Our Lord, Matt. vii. 13, 14. in the gospel, compares the Christian life to a treasure, and to a kingdom ; he requires us to forsake all, that we may conquer and take possession of it. But such is the blindness of man, that he shews more fondness for misery and earthly pleasures, than for the felicities of heaven ; although he is convinced by his

his own experience, that all earthly happiness is full of bitterness, vanity, and imperfection.

The thoughts of our salvation take up the least part of our time on earth, whilst we bestow the rest in trifles, and upon things that are next to nothing, without scarce ever reflecting upon eternity. We believe in a day of judgment, and that God's justice will punish the wicked, and yet we scarce ever think of it to good purpose; we know that the righteous shall scarcely be saved, and yet we live as if we were secure of our salvation. We are not ignorant that the kingdom of heaven will not be given but to those who offer violence to themselves, and yet we pursue our inclinations in every thing we do: we know that the martyrs and other holy men obtained glory by their sufferings, and yet nobody will be at the pains to imitate them. Some are always busied about their farms, and others their merchandize, &c. whilst our salvation is the only thing we are unconcerned about. Thus we pass away our

lives, without duly reflecting upon God's severe judgments; on his irresistible wrath which will be revealed on that terrible day; or on the small number of the elect, and the infinite multitude of reprobates and irreclaimable. We pass our lives without inquietude; spending our days in the enjoyments of the present life tho' so very short and uncertain, without troubling ourselves about the future torments which await unconverted sinners.

But how much soever we may alienate our minds from the thoughts of death and eternity, or flatter ourselves with deceitful hopes of a long life; as the very hour of our death is before ordained, it is impossible for us to prolong it for a moment; at that awful period all the glory of this world, the lustre whereof has so often puffed us up with pride, will vanish like smoke; at that awakening instant man will be convinced, and perhaps too late, of his blindness, and the mutability of all earthly things. The heart of man, since the fall of our first parents, is so much inclined towards the things

things of this world, that it seldom relishes those which belong to heaven. Its judgment is corrupted, because it follows the maxims of the flesh, which seduces it from the right path, and renders it insensible to every thing but what is material, and affects the senses. It is not delighted with spiritual things, because the sensual man comprehends not what appertains to God. Thus its strong propensity to earthly matters is the reason why it conceives not the nature of its true felicity ; for, when the heart is once become terrestrial, how can the mind be otherwise than misguided by the false appearance of things ? Thus it is eager after a supposed happiness, and in the mean time loses the real one. The carnal man becomes so fond of his errors, that he will not be undeceived, for fear he should see his pleasures diminished, and the supposititious enjoyments of this life impaired ; and that he may not give the least disturbance to the imaginary tranquillity he enjoys in this life, he puts the terrifying thoughts of death and eternity at a great distance from him,

till on his death-bed they affright and fill him with horror and dismay. What account is he then likely to give, at the tremendous bar of God, of his conduct on earth? *Be wise therefore, in time, ye that forget God, lest he snatch you suddenly away, and there be none to help.*

Maxims and Rules for a Christian Life.

SEEK first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all other things shall be given unto you.

If you love me, says Christ, you will also love my commandments; he that loves me is he that loves and keeps my commandments.

He that keeps God's commandments abides in him.

The whole law and the prophets are comprehended in these two commandments: To love God and our neighbour.

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The love of God is the source of every thing that is good ; and self love the origin of all evil.

Religion consists in charity. This destroys in us the desires of the felicities, and the fear of the misfortunes of this world.

We so far go on to perfection, as our charity and love increases in us towards God and our neighbour ; love all your friends in God, and your enemies for God's sake.

Let our love for men be ever so great, our love for truth must exceed it ; because we ought not to love them inconsistently with that truth which has commanded us so to do.

Let our love for our friends be ever so excessive, we must never love their faults. We ought to check them with meekness, prudence, and charity, when occasion presents.

Entertain true charity for him that tells you of your faults ; and, after that, tell him of his own as plainly as you think fit.

There is nothing in the world that more shews a man to be inlightened with the spirit of God, than his charity in endeavouring to correct sin in others.

If you intend to correct your neighbour, you must begin to correct yourself first, because nothing is nearer or more present unto us than ourselves.

We must consider of our own salvation, before we think of that of others; we cannot communicate that peace we are not master of ourselves; and it is very difficult to purify another man's heart, whilst our own is polluted with sin.

All the knowledge and happiness of a christian consists in loving God with all his heart, and in checking and restraining every thing that opposes the establishment of this love in his soul.

Knowledge, without piety and humility, fills our hearts with pride, and serves only to render a man more wicked and haughty.

Knowledge commonly intices us to lord it over our neighbours, and to have a high opinion of ourselves; a fatal error indeed !
because

because we are nothing, and we cannot actually be any thing, unless we become humble, and have a modest opinion of ourselves.

The chief knowledge of a christian is to meditate upon the example of the crucified Jesus; and to learn, as he admonishes us, to live and die in humility and repentance.

He that knows how to despise the world knows every thing; and without that knowledge he knows nothing.

We must divest our heart of all its affection to the world, if we intend to be freed from the evils it brings upon us.

We must abandon that voluntarily, which it is not in our power to keep.

That which appears great and exalted among men is an abomination before God.

It is an unhappiness to deceive the world, by exciting in them such an esteem for us as we do not deserve; but it is a much greater misfortune to copy the faults of others, and to have a good opinion of our-

selves, because other people, who cannot penetrate our hearts, have an esteem for us.

If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

He that affects to be beloved of the world must be an enemy to God.

The world is a mortal poison, and the cause of all manner of evil.

Our soul is never in peace there; and the satisfaction, which truth inspires us with, is best relished in our solitude.

People addicted to the world dread solitude, because it would afford them leisure to sound the bottom of their hearts, and to be undeceived in those worldly maxims they delight in. The more pleasing carnal conversation proves, the less our thoughts will be inclined to God and salvation.

Nothing is so apt to harden us in our disorderly courses, as to see the same practised in others; certain actions, which would appear abominable to us in our solitude, appear with a quite different aspect, when we see them frequently repeated.

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The conversation with, and the example of persons addicted to the world, are apt to persuade us, that we ought to act like them, and thus insnare us in spite of ourselves. Jesus Christ delighted in solitude, and he urges and commands us to follow him, and gives us power and strength to do it. There is no putting off God with a partial service; he that gives him not all gives him nothing. He that will find all must lose all. We are unworthy of Christ, if we keep any thing from him. Having him we have every thing, and can want nothing that is good; but we cannot expect to obtain this inestimable pearl, unless we quit, at least in our hearts, all worldly things. We cannot have God, but in proportion as we abandon his creatures, nay ourselves also.

Faith without good works is dead.

Every tree that bears not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

He that believes in God shall be the same spirit with him.

He

He that knows the will of his master, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

If ye repent not, ye shall all perish, says our Saviour.

Purify what is within, and that which is without will be clean.

The whole christian life consists in the expiation of our past sins by repentance, and in the mortification of our passions, by abstaining from them for the future. Repentance is a remedy to the guilty, and a glory to the innocent. We know Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, by the many wounds wherewith his body was torn, and by the cross on which he died; and he will have no disciples, but such as carry the marks of his passion in their bodies, and are willing to be crucified with him, and for his sake.

We have always the greatest reason to stand in fear of the justice of God, when he leaves us to ourselves, and lets us alone in our disorderly courses, as if he beheld them not.

The

The Lord sees all the ways of man, and marks all his steps.

Prepare for death in all the actions of your life.

Watch and pray, for you know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh, says our Lord.

Remember the end of your life, and you will scarce ever sin.

We ought not to fear death, because it will put an end to our sins; and we ought not to wish for life, unless that we may have longer time for repentance.

The fear of death is too often the consequence of a bad life.

To remove the bitterness of death, we must die every day to the world, and to ourselves; and then death will be to us the beginning of eternal life and happiness.

Let us live in this world like travellers, and consider it as a passage which is to lead us to eternity: Thus death will seem to us like a desirable port, where we shall see an end of all our miseries.

Let us accustom ourselves to think every moment to be the last of our life; and let us
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us accordingly put ourselves in a suitable station : By this continual practice we shall die insensibly to the world and to ourselves, we shall live in Jesus Christ, and death will be to us an object of joy, and not of fear.

The end of him who fears God will be happy.

He that fears God will be always free from fear, because he places all his confidence in him alone.

We have but one thing to fear, and that is, lest we should fear any thing besides God.

Fast and pray, that ye fall not into temptation, says our Saviour.

Vigilance preserves us from falling, and prayers obtain for us the grace of being faithful.

They that ask shall receive, they that seek shall find, and to those that knock the door shall be opened.

The love of God excites us to pray, and prayer produces that love.

Prayers are the shortest and surest means to correct our faults; it is for want of prayer,

prayer, that we are most commonly so apt to fall.

It is our own fault that we do not enjoy the true riches, because we need only ask to obtain them.

Fasting without prayer signifies little; but prayer induces us to fast, and fasting promotes prayer.

Whatsoever you ask for in prayer will be granted you, provided you pray in faith.

Put your hopes and comfort in the Lord, and he will accomplish the desire of your heart.

He that seeks the Lord shall be in want of nothing.

The Lord keeps a watchful eye over those that remain faithful; he forgives those that are humble, and hears their prayers, but treats the proud according to their deserts.

The Lord keeps life and death in his hands; he impoverishes and enriches, he pulls down and sets up at pleasure.

Vain-glory is a most detestable evil, and the greatest of all illusions. It corrupts in
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us every thing that is good ; it robs us of the true glory, and of the grace of Heaven.

All human glory, all temporal honours, the grandeur and lustre of the world, all these, I say, are nothing but folly and vanity, if compared to everlasting glory.

If you become not as humble as an infant, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, says our Saviour Jesus Christ ; and he that is the greatest among you, let him be like your servant ; for he that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

All virtues are vain and insignificant without humility. From the humility of our heart all our actions and words should spring.

We do not make any further progress in virtue, than as our humility increases.

The spirit of God is humility. A true and sincere humility ought to be such as that we would be found possessed of at the last ; but there is still a higher degree of humility, which is to be accounted as nothing, and contented with whatever befalls us.

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A voluntary humility is subject to pride ; but it will not be so, if we renounce our own wills, and submit them to others.

Envy, jealousy, quarrels, and disputes, all arise from pride.

If you be really humble, you will not be troubled with any of these vices.

He who thinks himself something is deceived ; such a one is actually nothing.

The more humble we are, the more generous we shall be ; because we trust less to ourselves, and our confidence in God increases.

If we are contemned by men, we have no occasion to think it hard, did we consider how guilty we are before God.

Let us be always humble, and little in our own eyes, and we shall seldom fall into temptation and sin.

The life of man is a continual temptation on earth.

We shall not be esteemed better christians for being great in this world, or for relishing its pleasures ; we were not made to take rest here, but to obtain, by our continual labour, - sufferings, and humility, (through
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the merits of our blessed Redeemer) that repose and glory which God has prepared for us in heaven.

Obedience is the soul and measure of humility. Obedience is more acceptable than corporal mortifications, because it is better than sacrifice.

A christian has no reason to be afflicted at any thing, but those sins which either he or his neighbour commits against God.

We ought not to be vexed if we hear any speak evil of us; for, if what they say is true, we ought to amend; and, if it be false, it gives us an opportunity of exercising our virtue and patience.

We must submit to the transitory pains and evils of this world, or expect to suffer everlasting torments in the other.

He that would be every thing in God must think of nothing but him.

He that is given to slander carries the devil on his tongue; and he that hearkens to him has him in his ears.

When we are in earnest to repent, we easily part with our riches; and we dread
more

more to misuse them, than a miser is eager to scrape them together.

It is more easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, says our Saviour Jesus Christ.

They are not the richest men who are in possession of vast revenues; but they that do not covet them, and are contented with what they have.

They who complain of their hard fortune, should rather complain of themselves, because they covet a happiness which is such only in outward appearance, instead of seeking after the true felicity.

The rich and great of this world have numbers of slaves at their command, tho' at the same time they are often slaves to their own passions.

It is the extremity of misery to have it in our power to do all manner of evil, and to have nothing to prevent our falling into sin; this, after all, is the only prerogative the rich and potent in this world can boast of.

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If you will be a true christian, labour to be truly poor and humble.

Rich men are not rich but for the sake of the poor, and the poor are poor for the benefit of the rich.

The desire we have of being charitable to the poor ought not to serve us for a pretence to heap up wealth; for he, whose heart is full of charity, will always find something to give.

Love of poverty belongs peculiarly to the Son of God, who became poor himself, that he might enrich us with eternal riches.

To desire nothing of this world, to acquiesce in being deprived of whatever it has bestowed upon us, and to believe that in us there dwelleth no good; this is the state of a perfect christian.

Such a self-love as delights in extraordinary mortifications, and despises those ordinary ones which serve to destroy that extravagance, is the effect only of a secret and dangerous vanity.

Let us not be tired in that place where God has ordained us to be, but on the contrary

trary let us take delight in meeting there with what may be displeasing to our senses.

Let us not consider our domestics as servants, but as our brethren, they being christians as well as we; we must bear with humility and patience their faults, as we desire God to forgive ours.

Keep what you have, lest another take away your reward.

The potters vessels are tried in the furnace, and so are men in their afflictions.

God makes us infirm, that we may be humble and patient, and to render us conformable to Jesus Christ.

God is the immaculate source of all comfort; whenever we seek for it in other things, they frequently prove the subject of our sadness; but every thing shall succeed well to those who fear God.

A christian gains more by his enemies than by his friends, because the first occasion his reward and blessedness, according to the assurance given thereof in the gospel, that christians are happy when they are persecuted by the world.

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It is not enough to learn to act well, we must also learn to suffer and to die well.

Deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow me, says our Saviour.

He that pretends to belong to Christ must live as he also lived.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Watch and pray, therefore, because you know not at what hour the Lord will come.

Happy is the servant whom his master, when he cometh and knocks at the door of his heart, shall find watching; the lord of life and glory will enter in and sup with that disciple, and take up his abode with him.

Moral and Political Maxims.

OUR most important business is to endeavour by the grace of God, to know and fulfil our duty; not to do any thing but what God will have us to do, and in such manner and time as he pleases. There
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is no true repose or tranquillity but in the love and exercise of virtue.

II. A man, to speak properly, lives no longer than whilst he keeps the spirit in exercise, and performs virtuous actions.

III. That which hinders most people from being good and virtuous is, because they are more solicitous in talking of than practising virtue. We talk of an honest man, but seldom strive to be so ourselves.

IV. Conscience is a witness within us, which follows us in all places, and reproaches us with our vices, representing them without intermission before our eyes. The reproaches of conscience are more intolerable to the wicked, than all the torments and punishments that have been invented; they render them insupportable to themselves.

V. Most men are governed by their passions. Prudence is the rule of a wise man, but of such there are but few, and the wisest of all are not so at all times.

VI. Wicked men deserve pity, they do more wrong to themselves than to others;
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because when they commit an ill action they corrupt their hearts, blind their minds, draw upon themselves vengeance, both from God and men ; and to increase their misery, an unfortunate death, and everlasting torments.

VII. Were we truly good as we ought to be, the evil words and actions of men would not corrupt ours, nor occasion us to alter our conduct.

VIII. The law of God is given in a very clear and intelligible manner. What commands he has laid upon us are within the reach of every man's capacity. It affords us sufficient light to enable us to perform our duty, but we are for diving too far into the point, and, instead of applying ourselves to what is laid open to us, we endeavour to penetrate what is hidden from us ; which is the cause of frequent errors.

IX. Great conquests, magnificent structures, monuments of marble and brass, &c. do not form the glory of a prince ; that which renders him truly glorious to posterity is to have reigned in the hearts of his subjects,
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by his conduct full of mildness, equity, and free from self-interest.

X. An easy prince, who suffers himself to be governed by his ministers, is guilty of much injustice ; private interest has at all times been noxious to the good of the public.

XI. The lives of princes are a mixture of good and evil, they being men like other people.

XII. Princes are praised rather from custom and interest, than affection.

XIII. Liberality is as pernicious to a prince as avarice, unless it be regulated by prudence. It is a great piece of weakness not to have spirit and resolution to refuse what is often asked without reason.

XIV. A prince that knows how to govern is the only fit person to teach that art to his children. How can a man teach another, what he has never learnt himself ? Theory oftentimes corrupts our minds ; a prince only knows the true use and practice.

XV. A prince ought to be liberal, when necessity requires ; but always to have more

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regard

regard to the public than private necessities.

XVI. A great fortune has flattery for its constant attendant ; this nourishes the faults of those princes that give ear to it, so that they become incorrigible, because a flatterer always knows how to attack them on the weak side.

XVII. The laws require the utmost rigour ; because they were made to correct our manners, and reform abuses. It belongs to the prince to be the moderator, according to the different conjunctures of time.

XVIII. It is a dangerous employment to be a minister to the passions of an evil prince ; they commonly cast the heinousness of their crimes upon those who have employed them in the execution, being themselves ashamed to own them. They commit evil actions as long as they reap the benefit thereof ; but they are sure to leave those that acted them in the lurch, for fear they should betray them ; so that they generally receive punishment as the due reward of their crimes.

XIX. When

XIX. When we are about to speak in praise of a prince, we should represent him such as he is, or at least such as he ought to be.

XX. Slander is a very pernicious thing, especially if we use it with respect to princes; sooner or later it meets with its due punishment.

XXI. A prince should speak but seldom on the spot; he ought not to speak without being prepared for it, and then to say but little; every thing he says being taken notice of, the less he speaks, the less he is subject to censure.

XXII. Princes ought to detest traitors and treason, and never make use of them; both their honour and security lying at stake. When they set prisons, daggers, or other unjustifiable practices to work against their enemies, they shew their own subjects the way to employ them against themselves.

XXIII. A king, though despoiled of his territories, is still a king, and retains the title, even though he did not deserve to bear it; he ought not to be faint-hearted or stoop too low to him who is stronger, let his

condition be what it will : He ought still to demean himself always like a king in the midst of his greatest misfortunes ; this will enable him to maintain his rank in spite of fortune.

XXIV. Since the welfare or the ruin of a state depends on wise or evil councils, that prince is happy, who by his prudence can discern the good from the evil.

XXV. The wisdom of the prince and his councils constitutes the happiness of the state.

XXVI. Princes are, above all other people, obliged to say little, and hear a great deal ; they ought to improve every thing to their benefit. Good counsels are beneficial in themselves, and such as are bad serve to confirm the goodness of the other.

XXVII. At court every man endeavours to be obliging ; hence it is that a courtier is more polite than a citizen, whose time is wholly taken up with his own affairs.

XXVIII. If a vile courtier, who in every thing aims only at his own interest, would but make a true comparison betwixt the benefit he reaps from his base parasitical court-

courtships and the preciousness of the time he loses on that account, he would soon be cured of his blindness, and save himself abundance of trouble; he would make a much better use of his time, and lead a much less troublesome and more contented life.

XXIX. A high birth, unless attended with merit and great qualifications, serves only to render more conspicuous those faults which would scarce'y be taken notice of in a person of an inferior rank.

XXX. We obtain oftentimes more by negotiations than by war; we lose frequently more than we get by gaining great victories.

XXXI. It is a laborious task to reform abuses and old customs. The diseases of the mind are like those of the body. Chronical inveterate distempers require strong and violent remedies for their cure. The disorders of the mind, owing their origin to our passions, will not admit of any remedies, unless such as are stronger than those passions that cause them.

XXXII. Nothing is more easy than to exclaim against the luxury and disorders of a state; and nothing, at the same time is

more difficult than to reform them, the remedy often proving worse than the disease. If we aim at reforming a state, we must not consider so much what is best, as what can best be done. It is more eligible to leave to time the reformation of those abuses it has introduced, if we find the same is not likely to be effected without violent remedies, and without the hazard of losing all.

XXXIII. In the grants of dignities and employments, a prince ought not so much to consider the great qualifications of a subject, as whether he be qualified for the station or office he is to be intrusted with.

XXXIV. A man of good morals makes a good man; but this will not qualify him for a good governor of a state, unless he has also learnt the art of governing well, and making himself obeyed.

XXXV. Nothing is more easy than to make an ill use of a great station; nor any thing more difficult than to discharge the duty it requires.

XXXVI. Were great men duly to reflect, that, as their wealth and riches may increase every day, so their senses which enjoy

joy them decrease continually ; this consideration would make them less covetous and less ambitious.

XXXVII. Each condition of life has its peculiar troubles : those things which seem great and delightful, when thoroughly examined, often turn to a slender account, and have a strong mixture of bitterness in them.

XXXVIII. It is a great misfortune to complain always of our condition, without endeavouring to amend it ; because complaints serve only to render it more vexatious and troublesome.

XXXIX. Liberty, and standing in defence of the public good, are the most specious pretences made use of by those who contend for that liberty, with no other intention than to suppress it afterwards with the greater ease.

XL. None but a good man can be a faithful man ; no sincerity is to be expected from a wicked person.

XLI. It is glorious to vindicate a good cause, for, in maintaining a bad one, even the greatest exploits lose their true value.

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XLII. It

XLII. It is much better for a man to concur with another in a good opinion from the conviction of his reason, than by the force of authority.

XLIII. The world commonly judges of things by the event. Let your conduct be ever so good, if the success is not answerable, your ill fortune itself will pass for a fault, and few will justify it.

XLIV. Great qualifications prove often the ruin of the master: A great capacity raises envy, as a smaller capacity begets scorn. We dread the reputation of great and good men, as much as we despise the baseness of a mean station; so that great virtues are as much feared, as great vices are detested.

XLV. As every thing we observe in mankind is not absolutely a virtue, so neither is every thing an absolute vice; there is generally an intermixture of good and bad qualities.

XLVI. There is a certain vicissitude in all human affairs; this makes our manners alter with the times: Poverty, which is always opposite to luxury, introduces frugality:

lity : Age is attended by diseases, and adversity sometimes corrects vices contracted by a long chain of prosperity.

XLVII. Did we but make due reflection, that most people act according to their own characters, we should, instead of exclaiming, bear more patiently with them. Sincerity belongs not to a knave, nor wisdom to a fool.

XLVIII. The wrong notions we conceive of things make us voluptuous, idle, full of inquietudes and ill designs ; whatsoever does not tend to render a man accomplished is not truly good ; and whatsoever produces the contrary effect cannot properly be called evil.

XLIX. Nothing makes a deeper impression on the minds of the people, than an opinion attended by zeal and superstition.

L. Diversity of opinions produce parties ; and these rebellions and intestine wars.

LI. There is nothing new under the sun ; all things are the same after you have seen them once ; so that it ought to be indifferent to a man, whether his life be long or short in this world, because it is always the same ;

and to see continually one thing is irksome and unsatisfying.

LII. It is a great folly to prize a life that may be at an end every minute, and which though of ever so long continuance, is but a moment if compared to eternity.

LIII. He that knows how to moderate his appetite, and to make a proper use of his good fortune, has found out the art of being happy.

LIV. Carnal men are tired with every thing, and at last with themselves, when they have nothing else to vent their spleen upon.

LV. Such as are accustomed to admire every thing are commonly foolish, admiration being a sign of weakness.

LVI. Friendships, even those which seem the strongest and most firmly settled, often prove only a well contrived point of interest.

LVII. Friendship, that it may prove agreeable, must be attended with prudence and discretion.

LVIII. An indiscreet and imprudent friend is often as mischievous as a real enemy.

enemy. He thinks himself bound to espouse a cause whether it be right or wrong, without any regard to the occasions or circumstances of time and place; all which serves only to exasperate people, and to raise contests and differences, which are much better avoided.

LIX. He is happy that employs his time to good purpose, so as to be satisfied within himself; this is the way to true contentment.

LX. Repose and tranquillity depend rather on our keeping a pure conscience, than on the place we live in; it is an error to imagine we may meet with true tranquillity in a solitude. If we co-operate with the divine grace we shall be enabled to calm the disturbances of our heart, which no retirement, no place of retreat, be it ever so far from the noise of the world, can otherwise effect.

LXI. All our retirements, not even the most solitary places in the world, will stand us in no stead, if we do not subdue our passions, or at least carry along with us a firm resolution of striving against them.

LXII. Ac-

LXII. According to the true maxims of wisdom, we stand in need of no other knowledge and science, than that which teaches us to know ourselves, to reform our manners, and to make us truly virtuous : and, if we rightly examine what the greatest part of mankind bestow their time upon, what they read, and what they study, we shall find them, for the most part, insignificant, if not dangerously occupied.

LXIII. Reading is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of the mind, by giving it understanding and knowledge. Conversation in the world may render a man more polite, but seldom instructs him.

LXIV. In reading, we must apply ourselves to few, but choice books, such as have a greater share of true reason than of frothy wit in them, and such as will rather instruct than please.

LXV. Few read as they should do, and reap the true benefit of their reading ; because they are ignorant how to chuse their books, to read with discretion, or to have so delicate and refined a relish as to understand rightly the true characters of the authors,

thors, or have capacity enough to be convinced by their arguments.

LXVI. When you read history, apply yourself to learn the transactions and inclinations of men.

LXVII. What renders knowledge nauseous and tiresome in some learned men, is, because few among them have a nice palate and politeness, and closely follow the dictates of reason.

LXVIII. Vain flourishes of rhetoric only discover the corruption of mens hearts, most of which would rather be flattered and seduced than instructed. Simplicity is the character of true eloquence. Truth wants no paint nor foreign ornaments; all our discourse ought to tend solely to the making her known to men. We should therefore speak, not to please, but to instruct and set things in a clear light.

LXIX. Conversation with the more intelligent sort, gives a man a certain politeness, without which he may be fitted for business, but will never please in company; nay, some would be insupportable to persons of genteel dispositions and deportment.

LXX. Know-

LXX. Knowledge lays the foundation of an honest gentleman, and conversation brings it to perfection. Study improves our natural talents, and enlightens our mind; conversation puts the last hand to the work.

LXXI. The world is a voluminous book, which teaches us to take example by others; if well read and attended to, it may make a learned person an honest man.

LXXII. We may shew a great veneration for antiquity, but ought not implicitly like children to receive all their opinions, or blindly submit to their precepts; we should examine them, and adhere to truth.

LXXIII. The ancients may inspire us with good thoughts; but every one ought first to make use of his own, and not be a slave to theirs.

LXXIV. Each age has its peculiar taste, genius, character, and politics.

LXXV. Each nation has its peculiar genius, and differs in manners as in outward behaviour. But the essential foundation of good qualifications is every-where to be met with.

LXXVI. Diver-

LXXVI. Diversity of temperaments has a great influence on the different sentiments men entertain concerning supernatural things. A meek temper is full of submission: indolence is always attended with fear; an unstable temper, full of doubts and stubbornness, will seldom suffer a man to recede from his own opinion.

LXXVII. The mistakes of the heart are always more dangerous than those of the imagination. Our judgments corrects the imagination, but the heart will entice us to evil, in spite of our judgment.

LXXVIII. Novelty carries along with it a certain charm, which the mind is scarce able to withstand. This makes even the best things lose their relish as if they were out of date, and such as are despicable in themselves to be coveted like new ones; because we judge of them according to fancy only, or as our corrupted palate and weak understanding represent them to us.

LXXIX. We should always be very scrupulous concerning matters of religion; we must not touch upon them without great circumspection and caution. A change of
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this nature is of the utmost importance, and draws after it numberless abuses and inconveniences.

LXXX. The corruption of our mind is much more dangerous and dreadful than that of the body, because it kills both soul and body; yet notwithstanding this, we seem to regard only the infirmities of the body; and some, alas! there are, who desire to live for no other end than to gratify their passions, and wallow in vice.

LXXXI. A great genius is seldom exempt from great faults, because he is generally haughty; on the contrary, men of moderate parts, being more humble, are less subject to error.

LXXXII. We need be mindful of no more, than properly to weigh our words and actions, for since our judgment is bounded within narrow limits, it meets with a continual agitation; and this kind of distraction, in reference to the different objects presented to it, makes it judge but very imperfectly of things.

LXXXIII. If we intend to lead a happy life, we must acquiesce in whatever casualties

faults befall us; it is a fault to vent our anger upon other men without reason, or to murmur against accidents, which are insensible of our complaints.

LXXXIV. The common people are always excessive either in mirth or sadness, because they blindly follow the first motions of either: Any thing that is superstitious, or that has something extraordinary in it, is very pleasing to, and has a great influence upon them, especially if it carry some probability along with it: For, as they scarce ever act with judgment, and mistake appearances for realities, they soon mistake any thing that is new, and suits their fancies for truths.

LXXXV. Few deserve the name of polite men, because few are of a noble mind, and masters of the necessary qualifications, viz. civility, complaisance, discretion, and circumspection, which form a polite gentleman.

LXXXVI. It is unjust to despise people of a mean birth, because it depends not on us to be born great.

LXXXVII.

LXXXVII. Conversation is the cement of the commerce of a civil life; by conversation our minds communicate their thoughts, and our hearts discover their motions. It is necessary to man, because he was made a sociable creature.

LXXXVIII. Never solicit the friendship of those that are desirous you should not think of them, and are willing to forget you; for in making your court to them, you will, instead of gaining their good will, only raise their anger against you.

LXXXIX. It is a great happiness to meet with an understanding, discreet, and faithful friend; and to be in a condition to take and follow his advice. For, it frequently happens, that we think it a dishonour to hearken to any body's counsel but our own, and thus we go astray for want of a good guide.

XC. It requires as much prudence and discretion to give good advice, as it does to follow it. Every man stands in need of good counsel; therefore we ought not to reject it, though it be not given with a good grace.

XCI. A

XCI. A good humour or temper is as requisite in order to our enjoying a pleasant life, as it is to live at ease with others, because ill-natured people are commonly as troublesome to others as they are to themselves.

XCII. Humour has frequently as large a share in great actions, as personal merit. The affairs of this world are transacted by men who are governed more by their passions, than by reason and true policy.

XCIII. A mixture of passion destroys the very end of our discourse; because our speech represents not only our conceptions, but also in what manner they were conceived.

XCIV. Industry frequently makes a full amends for the want of merit; hence it is that the art of making ourselves appear valuable in the world, commonly procures us more reputation, than even the greatest merit is able to do.

XCV. We should never be grieved at what is spoken against us; for, if it be true, we ought to reform our conduct: if, on the
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contrary, what is reported of us be false, and we appear to be concerned at it, the world will think it actually true. If we despise such reports, they lose their credit, and he that made them, finds himself disappointed of the pleasure he proposed to himself by propagating them.

XCVI. To be over-credulous and rash in our judgment, concerning matters that come before us, proves the cause of great irregularities. It is not sufficient superficially to consider words and actions in order to give a sound judgment; we must search to the depth at leisure, and, without prejudice, pry into the motives as well of the words as actions.

XCVII. Those pleasures which flatter our fancies, and appear most durable to us, are not in reality more than a pleasing dream; and, after we have tasted them, leave behind nothing but vexation, because they lasted so short a time.

XCVIII. You will scarce ever hear of a great crime committed, that is not followed and attended by others.

XCIX. There

XCIX. There is scarce any enormity which a woman is not capable of committing, after she has prostituted her honour.

C. The souls of abundance of women are as much painted as their faces, such do nothing without design : dissimulation is the main art they practise to impose upon mankind.

CI. It is the very nature of reason to be peaceable and easy ; whatever is transacted in a tumultuary, turbulent, and violent manner, is contrary thereto.

CII. In the heat of wicked actions, we] may expect more from time than reason. We must stay, and with patience hope, that the world will undeceive itself ; since too much argument oftentimes makes things worse.

CIII. Patience in excessive pains, afflictions, disgraces, and misfortunes, is an infallible mark of a great, courageous, and truly virtuous heart ; it is a weakness to fall under the weight of them. They who destroy themselves, when under misfortunes, are cowards, because they have not resolution

tion to support their character in the world, when tried in the furnace of affliction.

CIV. The hopes most men conceive to escape with life, even in the most violent diseases, render them insensible of death.

CV. Playhouses are schools of vice, and nurseries for the corruption of good manners.

CVI. Interest or some other passion being generally the object of marriage, no wonder there is so little friendship in it; indifference, scorn, mistrusts, jealousies, and inquietudes, which produce suspicions, complaints and quarrels, soon remove even the very shadow and resemblance of affection in this state.

CVII. True wisdom consists in performing good and pious actions.

CVIII. It is difficult to know the real truth of great actions, because they are most commonly very differently related; some believe every thing they hear, and relate it accordingly to others; some disguise truth by fictions; and thus truth and falsities are transmitted to posterity.

CIX. The

CIX. The wicked must be punished in order to reform them, and protect the innocent against their attacks, that they may not be corrupted by their evil example, and hopes of impunity.

CX. Poverty commonly inspires men with boldness and temerity: no people more dangerous, than they that have nothing to lose.

CXI. False reports are most commonly raised by a sort of people, who, knowing they are not capable of causing themselves to be taken notice of by their good qualifications, endeavour to raise their fortune on the ruin of the reputation of others.

CXII. We might correct our own faults, but will not; at the same time, though it is not in our power to reform others, we are always observing their miscarriages.

CXIII. Unjust undertakings, tho' they prove ever so successful, always turn to the detriment of the prince that directs them, because they render him odious to other princes. His aim ought to be, to establish his reputation on a real esteem; without which a kingdom cannot flourish long.

CXIV. Some

CXIV. Some men of learning are worse than other people; because they make it their business only to know, but not to practise.

CXV. Nothing is more deceitful or dangerous than a hypocrite; an honest man ought to appear plain and natural; frankness should appear both in his countenance and actions.

CXVI. We should at all times mistrust those that praise us to excess; they are lavish of their praises, with a design only the more easily to deceive those they praise; modest praises are commonly most sincere, and least to be suspected.



F I N I S.

